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September 21, 1996: Trash It!

BY BILL GLEASON



This month, the largest event in the history of the diving world will take place. It will be held in every state, and in more than 84 countries around the world. It is the second International Underwater Cleanup, where volunteer divers and their families donate a little bit of their time to the U/W world. As the underwater component of the International Beach Cleanup Day, we will link hands (and gloves) with more than 200,000 citizens who care about the environment.

Underwater Cleanups are organized by dive stores, companies, instructors and concerned divers in every state. Some (such as Laguna Beach, California) attract hundreds of divers. Others are limited to just a group of friends. The volunteers work lots of hours behind the scenes coordinating the events and they can use all the help they can get. That's where you come in. As a diver or snorkeler you can participate in any of the events. All you have to do is call your local coordinator and find out the place and time of the Underwater Cleanup being held closest to you. The organizers provide garbage bags and take care of reporting the amount and type of trash that's picked up. We do the picking up part.

The main purpose of the Underwater Cleanup is not just the environment. Thanks to the ongoing efforts of The Center for Marine Conservation (a founding co-sponsor of the event), there's a larger story to tell than just picking up trash. The data the volunteers collect is compiled into a very impressive report that details the type and amount of garbage collected. This report is then distributed to lawmakers, government officials, environmental groups and citizen action groups to call attention to the very serious problem of marine debris.

Marine debris is more than just a fancy name for trash. A plastic six pack holder, tossed into a landfill, poses little threat to the environment. Although it won't decompose for several hundred years, it doesn't greatly affect the environment. That same six pack holder, tossed over-

board or into any of our oceans, seas or local waters, can injure, maim and kill marine life, aquatic birds and mammals. Many types of trash are much better suited to slow decomposition in a landfill or other types of topside handling, because their decomposition underwater (which is usually rapid) often exudes toxins that are hazardous to the entire marine system. This is the larger issue of the Underwater Cleanup, one which says we have to stop using our waters to get rid of our trash. Just because it sinks out of sight does not

volunteer effort, our message for cleaner waterways went way beyond the 17,000 participants and reached millions of people. That is a good thing.

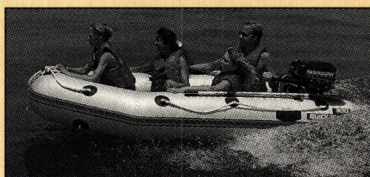
The International Underwater Cleanup would not be possible without the unsung efforts of the many volunteers who make the event happen. To each and every one, our heartfelt thanks for not only caring about our local waters but doing something about it! And, to all of you who participate in Cleanups, large and small, again, our thanks. Make sure your local media know about it as well! In addition to the efforts of the Center for Marine Conservation, we should also tip our hat in the direction of PADI International for its critical role in helping create the event. Its efforts in helping dive stores and instructors plug into the international effort were incredible, and worth perhaps triple its sizable dollar contribution. The world's largest certification agency is also showing us it is as committed to a cleaner ocean as we are.

The other critical player behind the scenes is Ocean Futures, the environmental arm of a broad based industry coalition known as DEMA. The efforts of both of these organizations often go unnoticed but it's fair to say we wouldn't have an Underwater Cleanup without its support as well. Whenever possible, SKIN DIVER lends its help and support to all these organizations and to the volunteers as well, since we can't think of a project which has such a direct payback in terms of cleaner water!

The next six pages of this special issue are dedicated to the volunteers who give generously of their time, money and effort to the Underwater Cleanup. The best way we can all say thanks to them is to set aside a couple of hours on September 21st and join these divers in helping to clean up our waterways. Don't be surprised, divers being divers, if you happen to have a good time as well.

Body Glove is dedicating a couple of spots on its company boat to the staffers at SDM during the U/W Cleanup. On September 21, look for me just offshore in Southern California. Apparently, I got the job as trash counter in addition to being a collector. I'm up for it and hope you'll join in the effort as well. Mark your calendars, please: September 21, 1996. Trash It! 

Special Drawing for International Underwater Cleanup Participants



A 10 foot, 9 inch Quicksilver inflatable with a 15 hp Mariner outboard (contributed by Quicksilver) will be given away to one lucky participant. All you need do is send a picture or slide of you and the trash collected, your name, address and phone number to SKIN DIVER Magazine, U/W Cleanup, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles CA 90048. Entries must be received by October 21, 1996, for the October 25th drawing.

(Pictures and slides submitted will not be returned.)

mean it ceases to impact the environment. In many cases, trash underwater causes much more destruction than the same debris topside and hence our concerted underwater cleanup effort.

By joining one of the thousands of volunteer cleanup efforts, we are sending a strong message to our fellow citizens. First, it's wrong to dump your trash in our waterways. Second, we're going to keep cleaning it up until there's none left. And third, we're coming after the folks who think it's OK to trash our oceans! Many of the volunteer organizers, appropriately earning the unofficial title of Trash Captain, will also invite local radio, T.V. and newspaper representatives to the events. Last year, there were thousands of stories printed and reported on U/W Cleanups around the world. With just a few hours of

photo/courtesy Quicksilver

1996

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A Minute of Your Time, Please



It will take less than a minute to fill out the card on this page. Even if you stop reading right now, please tear it

out, take one minute to fill it out with your name and signature and then mail it. We are not asking for money, votes, decisions or opinions (unless you'd like to share one). We are simply requesting your endorsement of an issue we believe is critical to the health of our oceans and local waters.

This is an election year and it's time to let politicians know there is a group of citizens concerned about the condition of

For the Future of Our Oceans!

BY BILL GLEASON

Simple logic would dictate most will answer yes to these very important questions about the oceans. Yet, we seem to be enmeshed in a presidential campaign (and the issues presidential candidates debate become areas of state and local concern as well) in which the major candidates pay only vague lip service to the environment. Both are, of course, ardent environmentalists by their own admission and definition. For divers,

something about it ourselves. Please take a minute to fill out the attached card and mail it today! It is nonpartisan and not affiliated with any political party.

Filling in the card is just the first step of a unique environmental action program initiated by Ocean Futures. Using the resources of divers (your numbers, votes and opinions), Ocean Futures will deliver tens of thousands of these cards to President Clinton and Bob Dole and distribute the results to state and local candidates as well. In a nutshell, we are looking for a response from our future leaders about their specific agenda and campaign points on critical issues affecting us all.

Please, just take a minute of your time and fill in this card. Mail it today. You

ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT

OVERFISHING? ☐ YES ☐ NO

HABITAT DESTRUCTION?

☐ YES ☐ NO

POLLUTION? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Above: All readers who mail in a response card will be entered into a drawing for a free Quicksilver inflatable with 9.9 hp Mercury Marine outboard.



photo/courtesy Quicksilver

our oceans. There are real threats to the continued health of our seas. The Georges Bank, once one of the most productive fishing areas on our planet, is overfished. More than one-half of the reefs of the Indo-Pacific have been doused with cyanide. Each year, the food yield from our oceans declines. Conservation efforts cannot keep pace with destructive tactics of international fishing fleets and poachers. This is not environmental rhetoric, just simple fact. This is not an environmental plea but a logical one.

Without regard to politics or persuasion, where do you stand on the major issues facing our oceans? Take this simple questionnaire and just answer a quick yes or no.

that's not enough. We'd like our presidential candidates (and Senators, Representatives and state and local officials) to spell out exactly what kind of environmentalists they are. Specifically. Point by point. We'd like to know where they stand on the major issues confronting the oceans and waterways of our land and our planet—before we cast our vote. In other words, now.

The big picture problems of ocean dumping, pollution, overfishing and habitat destruction are serious. So serious, it often seems, that an individual can't do much more about them than hope someone will solve them. Well, "someone" else might but while we're waiting for that to happen we might as well do

don't even need a stamp! You will join hands with thousands of other divers who are not only concerned about the environment but will put pressure on our future leaders to spell out specific solutions to these problems.

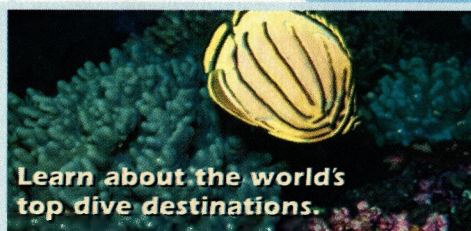
On behalf of Ocean Futures and from the staff at SKIN DIVER Magazine, our sincere thanks for not only caring about the future of our waterways but also for that valuable minute of your time.

All readers who mail the attached response card will also be eligible to participate in a drawing for a free Quicksilver inflatable boat powered by a four stroke 9.9 hp Mercury outboard contributed by Quicksilver. It's our way of saying thanks for caring about the future. 

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- Talk to equipment manufacturers
 - Try a re-breather in the pool
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- Register to win trips and equipment
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skin diver

Volume Forty-five • Number Nine



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The Diving and Snorkeling Capital of Belize

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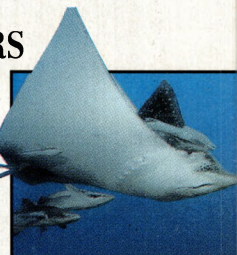
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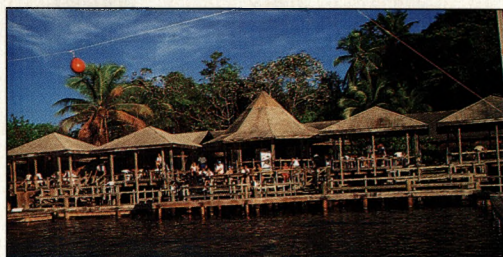
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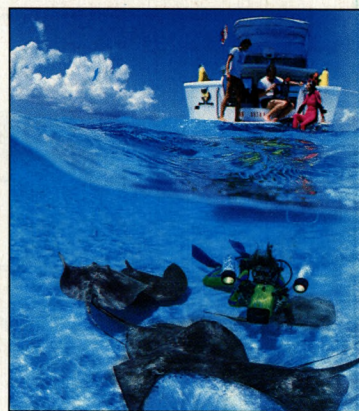
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ABOUT THE COVER: Susan Savelle cruises a kelp forest in the cool waters of Southern California's Santa Catalina Island. Comfort and enjoyment U/W are largely skill and equipment dependent. Equipment must be selected with water temperature and conditions in mind. For more on this subject, see page 19. Photo/Bonnie J. Cardone.

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PRINTED IN THE USA

Sea & Sea NX-90 PRO

A New Japanese Housing for the Nikon N90 Series

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

Sea & Sea Products of Japan recently began delivery of its new, all metal SLR housing for the Nikon N90 camera series. The ultimate in camera control, this compact housing will accommodate any of the N90 models: N90s, N90, F90X or F90. It offers all the bells and whistles of a professional housing, including a choice of seven lens ports and Nikonos five pin type TTL connection to any one of Sea & Sea's three different U/W strobes or similar TTL strobes.

The NX-90 Pro features a contemporary design—a very compact, two part housing made of a rugged aluminum alloy with hard-almite galvanized finish. The O-ring sealed halves are secured by spring-loaded chromed latches with a locking mechanism to prevent accidental openings. The cobalt blue O-ring is an innovation that allows easier detection of dirt, hair or other debris.

Two viewports provide access to all of the camera's data panels and through the lens image composition and focus. The small port on the housing top allows easy reading of the camera's LCD data panel. The larger port on the rear of the housing is fitted with an image magnifier for utilizing the camera's viewfinder, as well as the built-in data display.

Unsnapping the latches allows easy removal of the back door, exposing the rear half of the camera for convenient film loading. The camera sits on a large mounting shoe that can be removed by rotating a cam locking lever.

Two contoured handgrips on the sides of the housing provide fingertip touch of the housing's four major controls. Shoe mounts on the top of the handles offer a quick and easy method of attaching flash arms.

The nine external controls are evidence of the NX-90's professional de-

sign. Every function of the camera can be accessed U/W: power switch, command dial, exposure compensation, mode selection, manual focus, aperture control, AF locking and shutter release. There is even a button for manual activation of internal lighting on the LCD panel as well as the viewfinder data display.

The NX-90 Pro housing features a bayonet mount for easy changing of lens ports. Just a one-quarter counterclockwise rotation of the port will allow re-

moval of one port and replacement by another. A set of easy reading index dots and labels show when the port is in the lock or open position. For extra safety, an internal slide locking pin prevents the port from being opened accidentally.

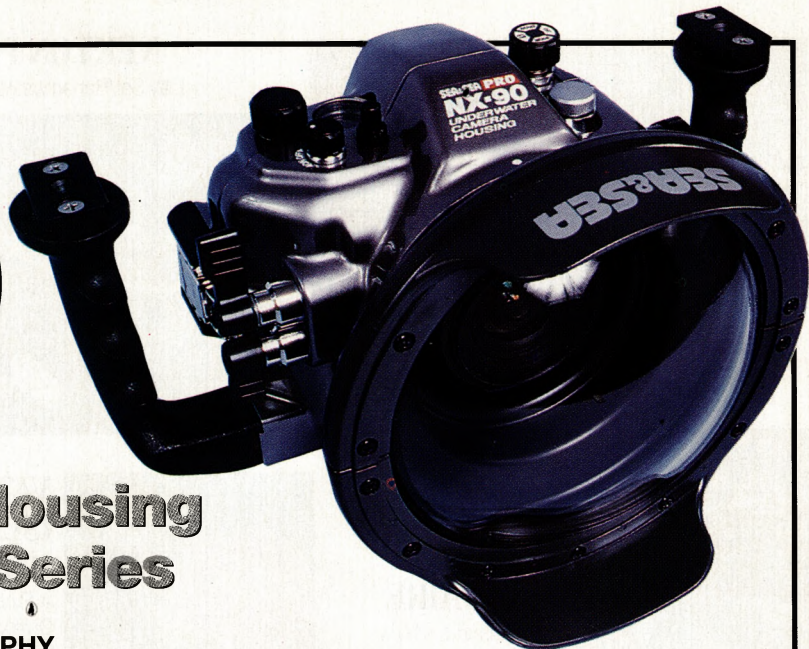
Sea & Sea has designed a series of seven lens ports and numerous extension rings that allow the NX-90 Pro housing to accommodate 10 different AF lenses, including fisheye, ultra-wide angle, wide angle, macro and zoom.

The basic ports for most frequent use include the flat port for zoom and macro lenses, the standard wide angle dome port for 24 and 20mm lenses, and the fisheye dome port for the 16mm full frame fisheye or 20mm lens.

Sea & Sea also produces noncorrodible ring gears to fit most Nikon AF lenses and a few other makes as well. Each ring gear is fitted with sure-grip O-rings that allow it to be gently slipped onto the barrel of the lens and yet provide solid contact for easy aperture or focus control.

The NX-90 Pro housing is designed to work with just about any TTL strobe fitted with a Nikonos V type flash connector. Sea & Sea produces its own series of Nikonos compatible strobes that includes the YS300 TTL-N, YS120 Dual and YS50 TTL-N. Any of these strobes can be used singularly or in dual configuration when connected to a DS-02 Dual Strobe Adapter. Sea & Sea also produces a full line of ultra lightweight articulated balljoint flash arms that attach directly to the housing.

The basic housing retails for \$2,095. Lens ports will range from approximately \$475 to \$650. The NX-90 Pro most definitely places Sea & Sea into the category of a professional U/W housing manufacturer, as the Nikon N90 series is used by many pro photographers.



NX-90 Sea & Sea PRO

SLR HOUSING

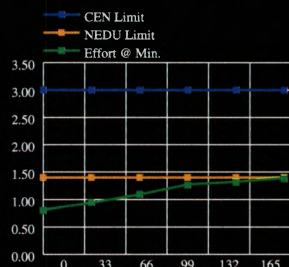
Housing material:	Aluminum alloy
Exterior color:	Gray
Interior color:	Matte black
Operating depth:	200 feet
Weight:	3.9 lbs. (air)
Camera:	N90 series
U/W controls:	9 (levers/dials/buttons)
Ports:	7 (fisheye, wide angle, zoom and macro)
Flash socket:	Nikonos 5 pin

For more information and prices on the NX-90 Pro housing and other Sea & Sea products, see your local authorized Sea & Sea dealer or, for the name of the dealer closest to you, contact:

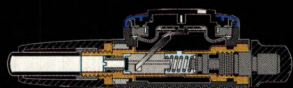
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U/W Photography USA
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Carlsbad, CA 92009
(619) 929-1909
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The XR2 is designed for use with any of the high-performance Century, Spectrum and Infinity First-stages by SeaQuest.



The above graph compares the Century XR2's Maximum Work of Breathing at various depths with the U.S. Navy's performance limit of 1.4 Joules/Liter



Precise engineering produces a compact, lightweight design with the highest of performance characteristics.

EVEN THOUGH IT'S PERFECTLY ENGINEERED, WE LEFT THE FINAL ADJUSTMENTS UP TO YOU.

Now you can breathe easy. Because the aerodynamic design of the compact, light-weight XR2 takes regulator performance to new levels. With its smoother internal surfaces, the XR2 requires less breathing effort. The smooth, natural air flow it creates helps keep the second stage dry in virtually any position - better breathing still.

Then there are your own personal touches. A diver-adjustable inhalation control lets you regulate air flow to diving conditions and your own breathing needs. With the Venturi assist you can fine tune the Venturi effect just the way you want it.

The performance excellence goes on and on. An oversized exhaust diaphragm decreases exhalation resistance. The Pulseair™ hose combines the air flow of larger diameter hoses with the flexibility and comfort of a standard diameter hose.

The XR2 is an engineering feat backed by a Lifetime Guarantee and supported worldwide. Visit your SeaQuest dealer today. You'll find there isn't one thing you'd change in the XR2.

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seaQuest®

The New Sea Quest XR2 Regulator

The Power of Precision Airflow Management

BY TY SAWYER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

Time, tide and the progress of dive equipment technology wait for no diver. Sea Quest's top of the line, super high performance XR2 regulator/Century

first stage combination is no exception. In fact, it's spearheading the charge forward. Packed with advanced features and sporting both innovative and practical styling, the easy breathing, compact and environmentally adjustable XR2 has eclipsed previous superior achievements in regulator design. It is an excellent all around regulator built to withstand the rigors and high performance demands of severe conditions and harsh use with ease and confidence.

USER DEFINED AIRFLOW: Airflow management has never been easier. Unlike standard regulators, the XR2 puts the power of precision airflow, as determined by environment or changing conditions, in the hands of the diver in the water, not the technician in the shop. The advantages may be paramount for safety and/or ease of breathing if your diving involves any variety of conditions—heavy surf entries/exits, cold or deep water, long swims, heavy exertion or even the normal pressure differences encountered during an average descent/ascent. With the technology of the XR2 at your command, you can adjust your airflow requirements before, during or after your dive, assuring yourself of a comfortable breath, fine-tuned for your personal satisfaction.

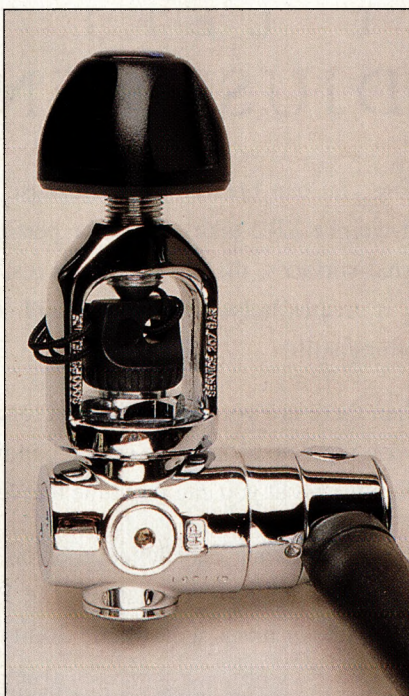
INHALATION CONTROL: Because dive environment, exertion and even physical conditioning dictate our air needs, Sea Quest has included two controls for adjusting airflow. The first is the large inhala-



tion control knob on the left side of the second stage. This feature determines how much inhalation effort is required to initiate airflow into the second stage. When conditions are optimal (or in deep water) and very little inhalation effort is needed, maximum sensitivity is usually preferable. When the regulator will be at your side instead of in your mouth, such as during long surface swims or when it's ready for use as an octopus, the control knob allows you to decrease sensitivity (require more effort) and avoid the nuisance of freeflow. Again, these adjust-

KEY FEATURES

- Environmentally sealed, balanced piston first stage
- Two high pressure ports
- Four low pressure ports on a 360 degree rotating swivel
- High volume, ultra flexible hose
- Compact, lightweight second stage
- Inhalation control knob
- Venturi assist control lever
- Downstream demand valve
- Extra large, round exhaust valve
- Comfo-Bite silicone mouthpiece



Top: The XR2 second stage regulator is compact, lightweight and user adjustable for both inhalation control and venturi assist. Above: The Century first stage is environmentally sealed for use in harsh or cold water environments.

ments can be made on the fly, as conditions demand.

VENTURI ASSIST: The second adjustment feature optimizes venturi assist. At the top of the second stage housing is the venturi assist lever. It determines the amount of effort required to maintain the airflow. This high profile lever slides between positions marked: MIN and MAX. The MIN requires a stronger inhalation. The MAX position allows direct, unencumbered airflow (very little inhalation effort). The lever can also be set at any position in between for incredible airflow

(Continued on Page 58)

Imagine Making Diving More **FUN**



PC LITE

Pocket C-Lite, the first of a new generation.

The PC Lites utilize a totally new opening and sealing system. The PC's unique snap-ring permits the complete front assembly to be easily removed for quick access to batteries and lamp. This new all-purpose PC Lite conveniently stores in your BCD pocket. Carry the compact PC Lite on every dive to illuminate objects night or day. Rotating switch provides quick on/off control.

The PC Lites feature new high intensity halogen lamps producing an incredibly bright penetrating spot beam.



AQUASHOT II

The Aquashot II is so simple and inexpensive you won't believe the beautiful results it can produce. Simply load the Aquashot II with a 35mm single-use camera and all you have to do is point and shoot. Oh yes, you do have to turn on the flash and advance the film, but that is as technical as it gets.

NIKONOS N5 TRAY

Ikelite's N5 Tray was designed exclusively for the Nikonos V. The compact design makes the N5 Tray an integral part of the camera with two strobe mounting points located underneath to reduce width. The N5 Tray incorporates a Velcro strap and rubber handle for comfort and security.

RAPID ADVANCE LEVER

Ikelite's Rapid Advance installs over the Nikonos V folding film advance lever, making film advancement fast and easy.

QUICK GRIP ARMS

Ikelite's Quick Grip Arms offer all the features of a ball-socket arm system, plus the added advantage of a quick release handle. Removable at the push of a button, the contoured rubber grip offers easy one hand control of the strobe.

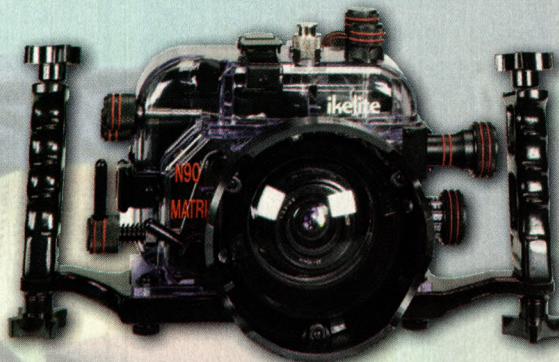
TTL SLAVE

Ikelite's TTL Slave Sensor turns any Ikelite Substrobe into a true TTL slave, operates up to 50 feet from the primary strobe, plus eliminates the need for a second cumbersome sync cord.



SLR-AF HOUSINGS

Choose the housing that affords full underwater use of your favorite 35mm camera, be it Nikon, Canon, Minolta or Pentax. There is not another housing at any price that will produce better photographic results or provide greater security underwater than an Ikelite SLR housing.



AQUASNAP

No need to worry where to buy cameras for the Aquashot II housing. Ikelite now offers a single-use-camera that can be used above water or in the housing. The AquaSnap camera features built-in flash and 27-exposure film.

SUBSTROBES

Designed and built in the USA for both the professional and amateur photographer, Ikelite offers 5 models of underwater strobes to meet different needs and budgets. The Substrobe 50 is the brightest and fastest recycling strobe in its class.

The Substrobe 100A offers variable output and angle of coverage. The 200 and 400 are the choice of pros the world over. All Ikelite Substrobes are covered by a two year limited warranty supported by a proven commitment to service unmatched in the industry worldwide.


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*is becoming common
knowledge.*

Simply stated, for the past 25 years we have cared more about creating comfortable divers than about marketing programs. In fact, hundreds of thousands of divers have gone through our courses, and we have won awards for our high quality certification products.

We have made a name within the industry, but not necessarily with the general diving public. However, this is changing as more and more dive operators turn to SSI. There are now over 1,100 SSI Dealers in 75 countries, and more people are getting certified SSI every year.

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SCUBA ACCESSORIES

SDM Editors Pick Items That Make Diving Safer, Easier and More Fun!

BY TAMARA COLLINS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

**EDITORS'
PICK OF THE MONTH**

DAN/PALANCAR

INDUSTRIES DAN TAG: Personalized with your name, DAN number, blood type, allergies, emergency contact numbers, the DAN hotline number, etc., this 2 1/4 by 3 inch tag could save your life. Clipped to your BC, it will alert your dive buddy and/or emergency personnel to pertinent information needed to make life or death decisions.

Made of Teslin and encased in a colorful, high impact plastic shell, it is negatively buoyant and water-proof. \$7.95. For more information, call (919) 684-2948.



DIVE SMART TANK TOTE:

Have sore shoulders and precarious balancing acts made you dream of a better way to carry your tank? Padded, adjustable and made from durable polypropylene webbing, the Tank Tote may just be the answer. Loops formed by the D-rings at the end of each strap slip over the valve of the tank. You can carry one tank or two, distributing the weight over the shoulders. The Tank Tote is available in black, red, royal blue, yellow and pink for \$29.95. Call Dive Smart at (413) 529-0036 for the address of your nearest dealer.



DIVER'S BEST CL-40 CLEANER

AND LUBE: Let's face it, U/W photographic equipment requires incredible maintenance. O-rings and electrical contacts, fouled by dirt and grease, could ruin a great shot or your equipment. Let CL-40's scientifically engineered enzymes do the work for you. Just a drop on the

connector contacts will dissolve old silicone and decrease contact resistance. You can also use it instead of standard O-ring grease. \$9.95. For dealer information, call (800) 991-DIVE.

AQUA EXPLORERS' DIVE WRECK VALLEY

U/W SHIPWRECK SLATES: The East Coast's renowned wreck diver, Dan Berg, has compiled a wealth of wreck diving experience into three sets (\$19.95 each) of shipwreck slates: Set 1, the Long Island South Shore; Set 2, the Jersey Coast; and Set 3, due out soon, a combination of the first two. Each four by six inch, plastic, waterproof slate features a site sketch, depth, average visibility, bottom composition, shipwreck history and present condition. Holes in the slates allow you to bind them together and/or connect them to a BC D-ring. Call (516) 868-2658 for a dealer in your area.



SURFCO KEY PER:

Shore dives always present me with a particular dilemma. Where do I stash the car key? Once I tucked it in what I thought would be a safe place and found it an hour later buried in the sand. Key Per could be an important \$5 investment for me. Attached by a peel and stick adhesive glue to a dive tank, surfboard, car body, boat, etc., your key is secured with an elastic loop cord and enclosed in a touch fastening pouch. Key Per is waterproof and UV resistant. For the address of your nearest dealer call (808) 488-5996.



ALL WEATHER

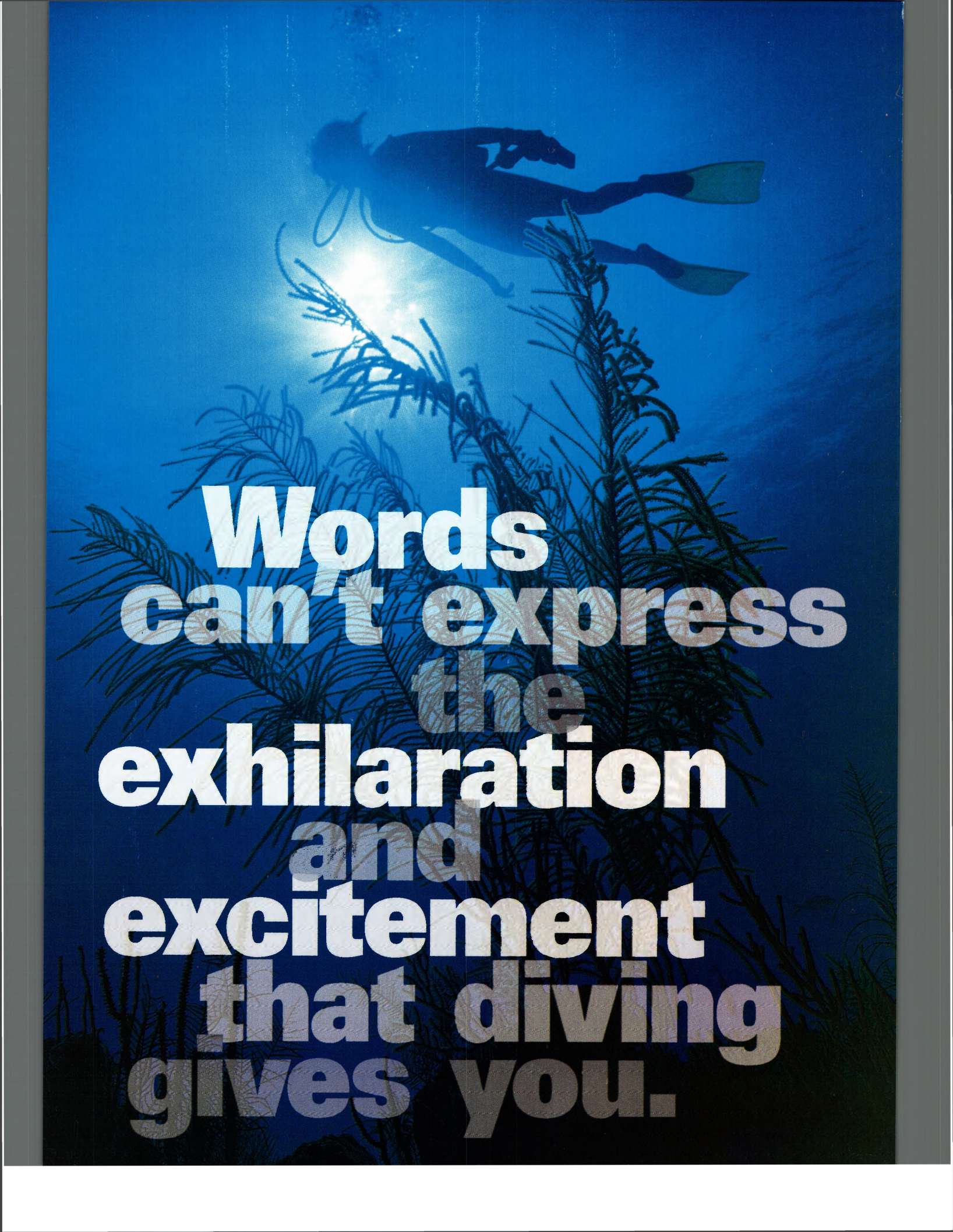
WHISTLE CO.

THUNDER-

STORM:

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An underwater photograph with a deep blue background. A diver is visible in the upper half of the frame, swimming horizontally. Below the diver, there are several tall, thin seagrass plants that reach towards the surface. The sun is visible as a bright, circular light source near the center of the image, creating a lens flare effect. The overall mood is serene and adventurous.

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and
excitement
that diving
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The Nikonos Underwater Photography System can put the thrill, adventure and fulfillment of diving into perfect focus for you. With the world's most technologically advanced underwater cameras, lenses and accessories, only the ocean itself offers more possibilities.

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To fully unleash your creative potential, add the Nikonos RS underwater photography system. When you look through the unbelievably bright, remarkably lifelike actionfinder of the Nikonos RS, the world's only underwater SLR camera, an amazing new world of undersea imaging comes alive right before your eyes.

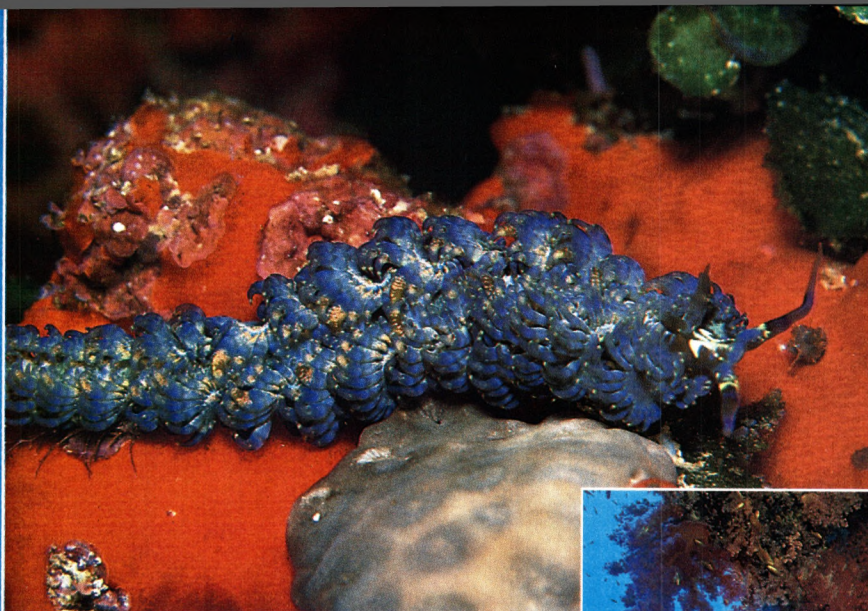
True reflex viewing, the world's most advanced autofocus system, Nikonos' ultra-sophisticated matrix metering and other technological advancements that border on the miraculous, bring you creative possibilities that only a few years ago were an underwater photographer's fantasy.

The Nikonos-V and the Nikonos RS — they put the universe of underwater excitement right in your hands.

Nikon
We take the world's
greatest pictures:
Yours.



Nikonos Can



▶ The intriguing world of macro photography with a Nikonos-V and extension tubes is always exciting. TTL automatic flash operation provides reliable exposures.

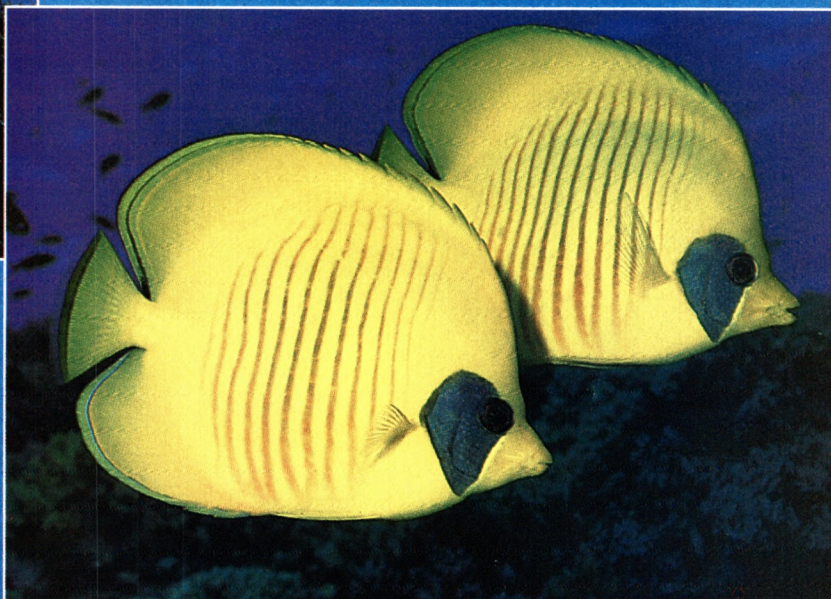
Reef panoramas are easy work for the 13mm Fisheye-Nikkor lens on the RS, with an incredible 170° view of the underwater realm. ▼

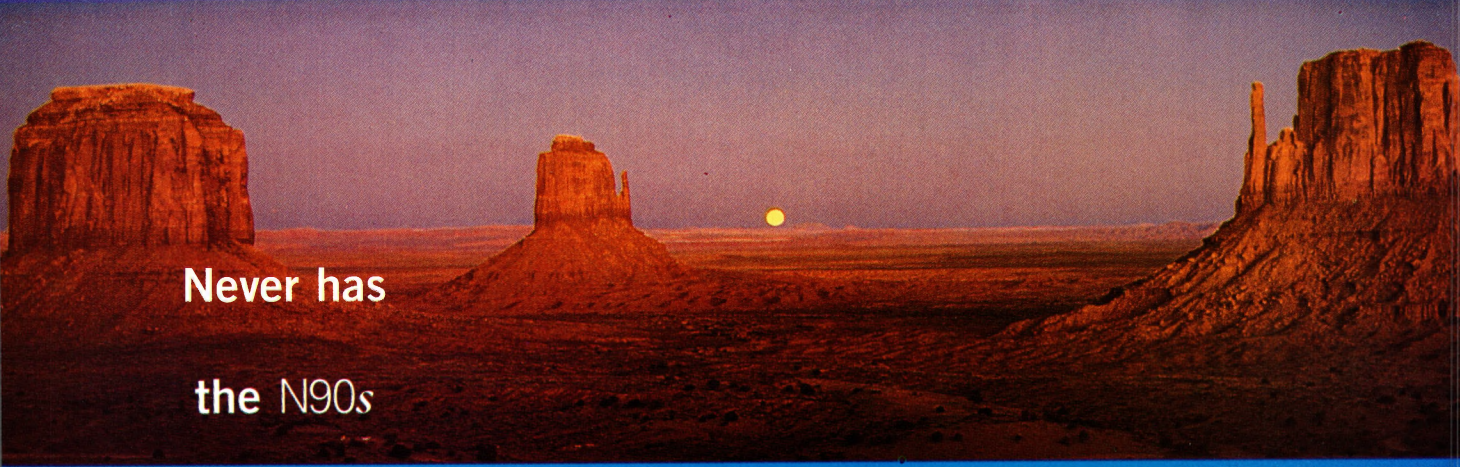


▶ The 50mm Micro-Nikkor is the workhorse lens of the Nikonos RS system. Capable of continuous focusing to life-size reproduction, this is the best tool for capturing the elusive beauty of shy marine life.



▶ The magnificent wide angle palette of coral colors articulately rendered with a 15mm Nikkor lens on a Nikonos-V. A compact system, designed for fast, easy handling.





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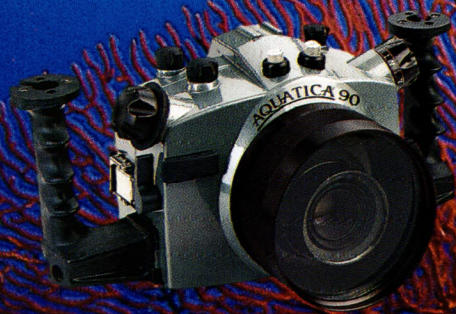
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Warm vs. Cold

photo/Walt Stearns

Proper Gear Selection is the Key to Comfortable Diving

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

Being comfortable U/W can be elusive. While we tend to focus on improving our skills, our equipment is equally important. It should be easy to use and meet our performance needs and expectations. It should keep us warm, feel comfortable and be suitable for the conditions in which we dive.

Water temperature plays a big part in equipment selection. While on land we may feel comfortable in 70°F temperatures without heavy clothing, water of that temperature is considered cold. That's because water conducts heat away from the body 25 times faster than air. Thus, in waters of 70°F and below, thermal protection becomes extremely important for diver comfort. Also because of water's conductive properties, many divers need some thermal protection even in warm water.

Scuba equipment made by Mares, a 46 year old company headquartered in Rapallo, Italy, is especially well thought out in regard to temperature. The Mares line includes wetsuits, hoods, gloves, booties and BCs designed to be worn together in specific water temperatures.

Water and land temperatures are hottest near the equator (0 degrees latitude); they cool as you move north

or south. The names of the wetsuits in Mares' Latitude line provide clues as to the water temperatures for which they were intended.

The 15th Parallel men's and women's 3mm nylon II neoprene shorties (\$134.95) are for diving in very warm water, 80°F or higher. There's also a 15th Parallel reversible jumpsuit for those who desire full body coverage. Designed for diving in 75 to 87°F water, this supple 1mm neoprene nylon II suit has a back zipper. It comes in men's and women's models and retails for \$164.95.

The 25th Parallel Jumpsuit, intended for wear in water ranging from 72 to 87°F, is 2mm neoprene nylon II and has a back zipper. The slightly thicker 3mm neoprene, nylon II 27th Parallel Jumpsuit is suitable for 65 to 85°F waters and comes in men's and women's models. While the thicker the neoprene, the more insulation it provides and the warmer the suit, limiting water exchange inside a suit will also keep the wearer warmer. To that end, both the 25th and 27th Parallel suits have skin (smooth, uncoated neoprene) seals at the collar to help minimize water entry. This unisex 25th Parallel Jumpsuit sells for \$149.95; the 25th

Dive comfort is enhanced with the proper thermal protection. You will need much less of it in Grand Cayman's 80°F waters (top) than you will in California, where 64°F water is considered warm.

Warm vs. Cold

Parallel Jumpsuit retails for \$199.95.

All of the above suits are considered warm water exposure garments. Mares' 42nd Parallel wetsuits are intended for cold water ranging from 45 to 75°F. The 42nd Parallel, available in men's sizes only, is 6.5mm neoprene nylon II. A two piece suit, it consists of a step-through jacket and farmer john. It retails for \$284.95.

Even colder waters demand even more protection; the 45th Parallel two piece suit for men and women is designed for temperatures in the 40 to 70°F range. Made of 6.5mm nylon I, it has plush inside, a step-through jacket and farmer jane/john. There are skin-in seals at the neck, wrists and ankles and a spinepad on the farmer jane/john to minimize water flow and exchange inside the

They come in both 6.5mm (men's only) and 5mm (men's and women's). For added insulation, Isotherm suits have Thermotitan (a nylon fabric containing metal fibers) between the neoprene and the nylon jersey on the outside and metal plush inside. There are patented, Mares-exclusive tubular skin seals at the neck, wrists and ankles to eliminate water exchange altogether. These seals mate with skin-out seals on the 6.5mm Hi Boots and two pairs of gloves, the 6.5mm Three Finger and the 5mm Cold Water. At the wrists and ankles the seals are overlapped with an adjustable touch-fastener closing flap for a custom fit. The 6.5mm Isotherm suits (\$544.95) have a watertight zipper on the back; the 5mm suits (\$514.95) have a tubular seal zipper. The hood designed for use with the Isotherm suits is the 5mm Unisex, mentioned above, which has a skin-in seal at the neck.

BUOYANCY COMPENSATORS

Warm water BCs typically provide less lift than cold water BCs. They are also more compact, lighter weight and have more padding. Warm water BCs don't require large lift capacities because warm water suits are thinner, provide less

buoyancy and thus require less weight to be worn by the diver. The thinner suits also mean the BC needs more padding to be comfortable. And, finally, since space and weight are always at a premium when traveling, compact, lightweight BCs are preferred.

Mares sells seven BCs. Three were designed especially for warm water diving; four can be used in all conditions but are especially suited for cold water.

The Southern Exposure (\$329.95), Vector LX (\$384.95) and Tropic Exposure (\$399.95) meet all of the specifications of a warm water BC, as outlined above. They have medium lift capacities, padded shoulder straps and a streamlined cut. Their backpacks are lightweight and compact.

The four cold water BCs, Vector Pro (\$454.95), Northern Exposure (\$489.95), Vector High Lift (\$599.95) and Vector 1,000 (\$599.95) have medium to high lift capacities (the Vector High Lift, large size, has the highest lift capacity of any Mares BC, 55 pounds). While the Vector Pro and Vector High Lift have 420 denier nylon bags, the Northern Exposure has an even sturdier 840 denier bag and the Vector 1,000, designed for technical diving, has a super sturdy 1,000 denier bag.

All Mares BCs come with the low profile Ergo inflator. It features a sliding hose retainer that keeps corrugated and low pressure hoses neatly together and a large, easy to use inflator button.

A WORD OF THANKS

A special word of thanks to the following companies that made this project a success:

Crew of the *Lorikeet*, Parrots Landing, Grand Cayman, BWI
Crew of the *Psalty V*, Psalty Adventures, San Pedro, CA

suit. The 45th Parallel sells for \$409.95.

There's also a 45th Parallel Semidry Jumpsuit for water temperatures in the 40 to 70°F range. In 6mm neoprene nylon I, this one piece garment has plush inside and a dry zipper on the back. The skin-out seals at the wrists and ankles mate with Mares boots and gloves to minimize water exchange. The attached hood has a skin-in seal for the same reason. The 45th Parallel Semidry sells for \$459.95.

For use with the suits mentioned above Mares sells color coordinated gloves and booties. They come in 2, 3, 5, 6.5 and 7mm neoprene, in sizes ranging from extra small to extra large (most models). There is also a 5mm unisex hood in sizes from extra small to extra large (\$39.95). The boots range in price from \$29.95 to \$64.95; the gloves from \$29.95 to \$44.95.

The Isotherm suits provide the most thermal protection in the Mares wetsuit line. One piece jumpsuits, they are unique, with numerous special features.



Warm water (top) means thinner suits, less lead and BCs with lower lift capacities. In cold water, BCs must provide greater lift.





photo/Walt Stearns



Left: Getting ready to enter Santa Catalina's cold waters, these divers wear Mares 45th Parallel Semidry Jumpsuits (left and right) and the Isotherm (center). Right: These divers are about to dive Grand Cayman in 15th Parallel suits. Below: Mares BCs designed for cold water include the Northern Exposure (left) and the Vector High Lift.



REGULATORS



Most regulators work equally well in temperate and warm waters. Extreme conditions such as ice diving, however, require regulators with special features. The Mares MR12 Akros (pictured here) is ideal for most any condition, including ice diving. At \$409.95, it is neither the most expensive nor the least expensive of the six regulators Mares sells. It has a compact, lightweight second stage with a patented Vortex Assisted Design. This consists of a finned bypass and a pivoting vane that combine to produce an easy breathing machine.

The Akros' nickel and chrome plated brass first stage features a Dynamic Flow Control system that minimizes the pressure drop during inhalation, providing consistently high performance under all work loads. A large diameter hose between the first and second stages, five low pressure and one high pressure port round out the MR12 Akros' features.

It is beyond the scope of this article to detail the features of these BCs; each is unique. Divers shopping for a BC should choose the one that fits best and has the features desired.

FINS, MASKS AND SNORKELS

Fins are the final consideration when it comes to selecting gear for warm or cold water use. Mares fins were detailed in our June 1996 issue, we will not duplicate that effort by examining them at length here. Suffice it to say that in warm water divers should consider using full-foot fins; in cold water, open heel fins, which have footpockets that can accommodate booties, are more desirable.

Masks and snorkels are not temperature specific. Mares offers numerous models of each, color coordinated to its exposure suits. Divers should choose those that fit and feel comfortable.

Almost any scuba accessory you could need is also offered by Mares. Check out the company's line in your dive store.

CONCLUSION

Being comfortable underwater should be the goal of every diver. It takes more than a refinement of skills, however, it requires the proper equipment for the diving conditions. You'll know you're comfortable when you can forget about your equipment and focus all your attention on what you're doing, whether it's sight-seeing, fishwatching, photography or whatever. If you're constantly fiddling with your equipment, you're not comfortable. Mares can help. For more information on the company's product line, visit your nearby dealer. For the name of the dealer nearest you, contact Mares America Corp. in Norwalk, Connecticut, at (203) 855-0631 or fax (203) 866-9573.

One may think that beauty is a minor feature for a regulator. However, if beauty combines hydro-dynamic shapes, high-tech materials, and ergonomics, then it becomes a major feature. At least as important as the many characteristics that make the MR-22 Abyss DFC regulator perform unique under the most severe conditions, the widest range of temperatures, and at extreme depths. ● Designed for extreme diving, the Abyss is therefore ideal for recreational diving. It is an advanced version of the MR-12 Voltrex DFC, which has been recently approved (September 1993) as "substantially surpassing the Class A ratings" by the US Navy Experimental Diving Unit. The brand new design of its first stage allows optimum hose positioning and features two inclined HP ports used for pressure/depth consoles, air integrated computers, and redundant pressure gauges. ● Moreover, the MR-22 Abyss DFC first stage incorporates an upgraded DFC (Dynamic Flow Control) system, which delivers consistent high performance breathing characteristics under all conditions, while the limited internal components are virtually maintenance-free for your increased diving safety. ● The MR-22 Abyss DFC ... how could divers expect anything more from technology? It's not by chance that it's from Mares.

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CAYMAN MADNESS '96

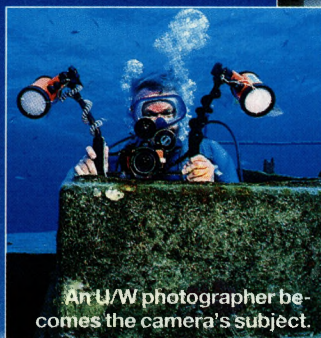
A Real Deal!

IN GRAND CAYMAN

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY GERI MURPHY



Above: Accommodations for Cayman Madness '96, "the dive deal of the decade," will be at the relaxing Treasure Island Resort.



An U/W photographer becomes the camera's subject.



An exhilarating encounter with curious Southern Stingrays (*Dasyatis americana*) at Stingray City.

It's not often traveling divers are offered a real Caribbean vacation bargain—but Grand Cayman has got one you just can't refuse. Here is the deal: low prices, great diving and lots of parties. Could a diver ask for anything more?

This fall, Caribbean Dive Tours and Bob Soto's Diving, Ltd., have once again teamed up to offer "the dive deal of the decade." During a seven week period from August 29 to October 24, they will be putting on Cayman Madness '96.

Each fun filled week (Thursday through Thursday) offers an eight day/seven night dive vacation package at one of Grand Cayman's top resort hotels or condos. Every week-long event includes diving Grand Cayman's best sites, seminars, demonstrations and social events. Participants have a chance to win hundreds of prizes, including airline tickets, PADI products and Scubapro dive equipment.

The week-long package price begins at \$869 per person and includes round trip air fare from Miami to Grand Cayman. Included in the package are six days of diving, seven nights' accommodations, a Cayman Madness T-shirt and numerous parties. Companies such as Nikon will be on hand to demonstrate equipment and loan demonstration models.

Last year's program attracted 1,029 divers from 28 states plus Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and South Africa. It is an opportunity to meet divers from all parts of the country as well as international visitors.

Cayman Madness '96 will once again be limited to 150 divers per week. As event promoter Ron Kipp

explains, "We limit our dive boats to 20 passengers per trip to ensure maximum safety and diver enjoyment. There is no problem with overcrowding at dive sites, since there are now more than 200

different sites with boat moorings."

For reservations, prices or more information about Cayman Madness '96, contact Ron Grzelka at Caribbean Dive Tours, (800) 786-3483. 🐠

Cayman Madness

Bob Soto's Diving and Caribbean Dive Tours are hosting seven consecutive weeks of diving and social events through **October 24** (not including October 4 to 10). This "dive and party" week-long package includes round trip airfare via Cayman Airways or Northwest Airlines, accommodations, daily diving and social activities, featuring the popular underwater treasure hunt, a beach luau and rum punch/steel band party. Additionally, there will be free dive equipment testing and use of Nikonos V cameras and strobes. Hundreds of prizes, totaling \$75,000, will be given away.

For more information, contact Caribbean Dive Tours at (800) 786-3483; fax (404) 565-0129. 🐠

Oceans '96

This year's Oceans '96 conference will be held **September 23 to 26** at The Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center. This year's theme is The Coastal Ocean—Prospects for the 21st Century. The littoral zones of global oceans and future technologies will be highlighted; nine technical sessions are planned, encompassing more than 60 ocean related areas, as are various other sessions.

For information, call (908) 562-5362, fax (908) 981-0538, e-mail: Oceans'96@IEEE.org or peruse the web site at <http://auiw1.tamu.edu/oes/>. 🐠

Southpoint Divers' Safety Weekend

The Southpoint Divers' Safety Weekend will begin on **September 28** in Key West, Florida. The weekend commences with a 5K, 7:30 am walk/run. Diver safety courses, including PADI medic first aid, dive accident management and the DAN oxygen provider, will be offered throughout the weekend. There will also be regularly scheduled dive excursions via Pro 42 jet boats. All proceeds will be donated to the Divers Alert Network (DAN).

Accommodations for participants will be handled exclusively by the historic Holiday Inn La Concha in Key West.

For information on registration and accommodations, contact Southpoint Divers at 714 Duval Street, Key West, Florida 33040, call (800) 891-DIVE or fax (305) 296-6888; the e-mail address is Southpoint@aol.com. 🐠

Texas Trashfest

The Texas Gulf Coast Council of Diving Clubs will conduct its 21st annual Trashfest on **October 5**. The ecological

dive will take place in New Braunfels, Texas, and focus on the Comal River and its banks. There is a \$10 entry fee; an awards presentation, dinner and door prizes will follow the dive and are included in the fee. Registration begins at 8:00 am at Prince Solms Park.

For information, contact Gene or Sara Baugher at 4426 Smooth Oak, Houston, Texas 77053 or call (713) 433-4761. 🐠

Tenth Annual Public Safety Diver Forum

The tenth annual public safety diver national forum will be held **October 8 to 11** at the Fraternal Order of Police, Lake Conway Facility, Orlando, Florida. Besides practical training for law enforcement and fire/rescue divers, teams of two divers can compete for prizes. Tuition is \$250 per team and includes the Michigan State Police S.T.A.R. program, DAN oxygen provider course, introduction to nitrox, personal watercraft basic rescue and more.

For information, contact Detective Ketrone Brown at (407) 836-4570, ext. 77240. Packages are also available from Central Florida Emergency Services Institute, 2966 W. Oakridge Road, Orlando, Florida 32809; phone (407) 855-3281. 🐠

YMCA Scuba Convention

The 37th annual convention of the National YMCA Scuba Program will be held **November 15 to 17** at the Huntsville Marriott and U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama. The convention is open to all divers regardless of affiliation.

For information, contact the National YMCA Scuba Program at 5825-2A Live Oak Parkway, Atlanta, GA 30093-1728 or phone (770) 662-5172. 🐠

International Underwater Medicine Symposium

The Federation Francaise d'Etudes et Sports sous-Marins, in association with the World Underwater Federation (CMAS), will hold an international symposium on breath-hold diving **December 6 to 7** in Paris, France. The physiology, psychology, limits and techniques of breath-hold diving, as related to professional and recreational activities, will be discussed.

For more information, contact Dr. Michel Leloup at 21 rue Voltaire, 93100 Montreuil, France or call 01 48 70 92 93; fax 01 48 70 71 90. 🐠

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Jeep

T H E R E ' S O N L Y O N E

[†]Always wear your seat belt for a fully effective air bag. Jeep is a registered trademark of Chrysler Corporation.

Dive Notes

PETER HUGHES INVESTS IN THE *FeBRINA*: The MV *FeBRINA*, which visits Northern New Britain Island, Papua New Guinea, including Kimbe Bay, the Witu Islands and Fathers Reefs, is now jointly owned and operated by Max and

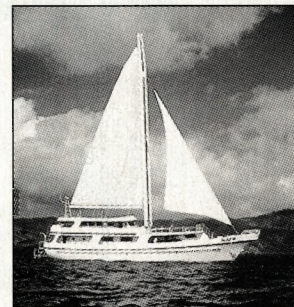
Cecilie Benjamin, Captain Alan Raabe and Peter Hughes Diving, Inc.

As space is limited aboard the *FeBRINA*, please contact your favorite dive travel planner or Peter Hughes Diving, Inc. For further information and/or reservations contact Peter Hughes Diving, Inc., 6851 Yumuri Street, Suite 10, Coral Gables, FL 33146; (800) 9-DANCER, (800) 932-6237, (305) 669-9391 or fax (305) 669-9475. The Internet address is <http://www.winnet.net/dancer/> and e-mail should be directed to dancer@winnet.net. 🐟

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SELISKY WINS E.R. CROSS AWARD: Lee Selisky, president of Sea Pearls of Minnesota has received the Historical Diving Society's E.R. Cross Award.

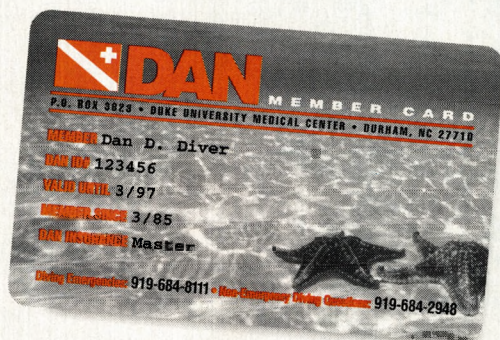
Sponsored by the Divers Institute of Technology in Seattle, Washington and presented by the HDS USA annually, this award is given to the HDS member who



has made the most outstanding contribution to advance its aims.

The Historical Diving Society USA, is dedicated to the preservation of the history of all forms of diving, including sport, military, commercial and scientific. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in diving's past. For information, contact the Historical Diving Society USA, 2022 Cliff Dr. #119, Santa Barbara, CA 93109; (805) 963-6610, fax (805) 962-3810. 🐟

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- Subscription to award-winning *Alert Diver* magazine
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The **NX-90 Pro** is the ultimate instrument for the professional underwater photographer—and anyone who wants to shoot like one.

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The Buddy Phone

Adding A Whole New Dimension to Diving

BY JIM WALKER

Have you ever lost a dive buddy? I mean temporarily. He's diving right beside you one second and the next, you can't even find his bubbles. At best this is annoying, at worst, dangerous. Wouldn't it be great to just ask your buddy where he's gotten to? With the Buddy Phone you can!

Whether you just want to keep track of an errant dive buddy, discuss underwater sites and changes in dive plan, pose an underwater model, guide visiting divers or conduct detailed search and rescue operations, the ability to communicate immediately and clearly is important. And, aside from making underwater operations much easier, communicating with the Buddy Phone can add a whole new dimension of fun.

POWERFUL AND VERSATILE

Although you can choose different Buddy Phone components, all operate similarly, using ultrasound (33 kHz) to communicate U/W to depths of 130 feet. Because communication is via line of sight, it can be affected by obstacles, sea conditions and ambient noise levels. However, the Buddy Phone is amazingly powerful. Clear, sharp communication can be carried out at distances of 1,640 feet or more!



photo/Bonnie J. Cardone

The Buddy Phone XT-100 consists of a transceiver and a mouth mask. Divers using it can listen and talk underwater.



photo/Gerrit Murphy

Using the Divator MKII Full Facemask and Buddy Phone Kit, Jean-Michel Cousteau (left) and Dave Stancil can talk to each other U/W.

All components of the Buddy Phone system are lightweight, rugged and easy to use. Depending on which you choose, you can listen only or listen and talk to other divers or both divers and topside observers.

The Buddy Phone was developed and is manufactured by Ocean Technology Systems. OTS has long been respected for its innovative, rugged and powerful underwater communication systems, suitable for the most demanding commercial applications. Although it can be used in a variety of operations, the Buddy Phone was designed specifically for sport diving. To make it more easily accessible to sport divers around the world, the Buddy Phone is available through U.S. Divers.

LISTEN ONLY

RX-100: Sometimes it is better to listen than talk. This is especially true of groups of divers following one leader who needs to impart interesting or vital information without interruption. Such is the case with scuba students and tour groups. Here the leader would wear a transceiver and each member of the group an RX-100 receive only unit.

The RX-100 is a handy little device that

slips over your facemask strap. Only four by four inches and weighing only seven ounces, you position it over your ear. The unit is powered by a nine volt battery sealed inside a tube by a bore type O-ring. Power will last for up to eight hours of operation or more. While there is no battery power indicator, you'll know if your battery is becoming weak by consistently poor reception. Even so, check your battery's power before each dive.

The RX-100 is activated when submerged in water and will stay on for a minute or so after being taken out of the water. You can activate it before diving by touching the two stainless steel screw-head contacts with wet fingertips. You'll know it's working if you put it to your ear as you tap or rub the case with your finger. The tapping or rubbing will be amplified and quite loud.

The RX-100 focuses sound in a reverse cone to concentrate it at your ear and utilizes both your eardrum and bone conduction. Surprisingly loud, it can be clearly heard underwater through a neoprene hood. If it is too loud, move it slightly away from the ear. You might have to time your exhalations around receptions because regulator bubbles can sometimes drown out reception.

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THE BUDDY PHONE

LISTEN AND TALK

To get the full amount of fun from the Buddy Phone system, you need to be able to talk as well as listen. There are several setups to accomplish this and you can choose the one that suits your needs and budget best.

XT-100: The XT-100 transceiver uses the same housing and power as the RX-100 and receives in the same way. However, to transmit, you need both a microphone and an airspace at the mouth in which to make clear sound. To accomplish this the XT-100 has a water-proof ceramic microphone secured in a black silicone mouth mask.

BUDDY PHONE CHOICES

RX-100 RECEIVE ONLY UNIT (3006-10): \$239. This single sideband receiver easily attaches to the strap of your facemask. Positioned over your ear, it lets you listen to Buddy Phone or surface unit transmissions.

XT-100 BUDDY PHONE (3006-00): \$420. This single sideband transceiver is part of a system that includes a special headstrap, silicone rubber mouth mask, microphone and magnetic push to talk button. With this system you can listen and talk.

STX-100 SURFACE UNIT (3006-50): \$995. This single sideband surface system includes a submersible transceiver on a 35 foot cable and a topside microphone. Speaker, volume and squelch adjustment knobs are built into a small case. This system allows topside personnel to listen and talk to divers underwater.

INTERSPIRO DIVATOR MKII FULL FACEMASK AND BUDDY PHONE KIT (3006-20): \$1,095. This system includes a yellow silicone rubber full facemask with five adjustable straps, a high performance regulator second stage, special low pressure hose, transceiver, dynamic microphone and push to talk button. It offers maximum comfort and lets the diver receive and transmit with maximum clarity.

The mouth mask replaces the mouthpiece of your regulator. It has a wide, comfortable flange that seals around your mouth and chin. A nylon webbing headstrap with adjustable, snap-over buckles secures the mask to your face. The center of the strap is a large oval of neoprene to keep it in the best position on the back of the head. The mouth mask is only available in one size but will fit most divers well.

The microphone is activated when you push the magnetic button switch on the outside of the mask. Press the button firmly and speak slowly and loudly—but don't shout.

MKII: The flagship of the Buddy Phone system is the Dicator MKII Full Facemask, produced by Interspiro. It offers the clearest communication and most comfortable operation of all. The MKII combines the mask, transceiver, microphone and high performance regulator second stage in one handy package. (The components of this system can be purchased together or separately.)

The MKII mask seals to the face and under the chin with a very wide, supple flange that is super comfortable. To keep it properly on the face there is a five segment headstrap, each segment passing through its own adjustable buckle. The clear plastic faceplate has a goggle shape at the top to offer maximum viewing area without creating too much volume inside the mask. The sides of the faceplate are matte finished to prevent distortions and distractions. Projections of the skirt allow attachment of glasses, should you need them underwater.

The regulator second stage has a side mounted diaphragm that doubles as an exhaust valve. Its downstream lever action demand valve is very sensitive but only allows air to flow into the mask when you purge or inhale. (It keeps a very slight positive pressure in the mask to keep out water.)

To prevent fogging and carbon dioxide

build-up, there is a separate mouth/nose chamber inside the mask. Air first enters

USER COMMENTS

Fun: "Being able to communicate with my dive buddies, as well as observers topside on our boat, was a real treat. Comments didn't have to wait until after the dive to be shared and we could guide each other to interesting sights."

Simple and Comfortable: "While I found the open freedom of the MKII Full Facemask especially nice, both it and the mouth mask (XT-100 system) were quite comfortable once I became familiar with them. Both were also very easy to operate and I communicated clearly with those underwater and above—as long as I didn't transmit at the same time someone else did."

the mask at the bottom of the faceplate and washes across it, passing through two one-way valves into the mouth area.

Exhalations pass directly to the regulator and out.

Inside the mouth/nose chamber there is a rubber platform with a V-shape on top. To clear your ears, you press up on the bottom of the mask, which pushes the platform up against your nose. The height of the platform can be set to three positions for individual comfort.

The MKII transceiver is positioned on the mask strap, over the ear, as with the other Buddy Phone systems. The microphone button is just above the regulator and the microphone is inside the mouth/nose chamber. For maximum clarity when speaking, you adjust the distance from the microphone to your lips. This is accomplished by slightly bending the two heavy wires that support the microphone.

Unlike the ceramic microphones in the other Buddy Phone systems, that of the MKII is dynamic and studio quality. While this creates especially clear voice transmission, if the mic gets flooded, sound quality can be distorted by clinging droplets. Tap these off. Also, if the mic is flooded, it should be removed from the mask after diving for proper rinsing and drying to prevent corrosion.

MKII PROFESSIONAL: A professional version of the MKII is also available, with a gray silicone skirt instead of yellow.

(Continued on Page 59)

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THE CAYMAN

Your Guide



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THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



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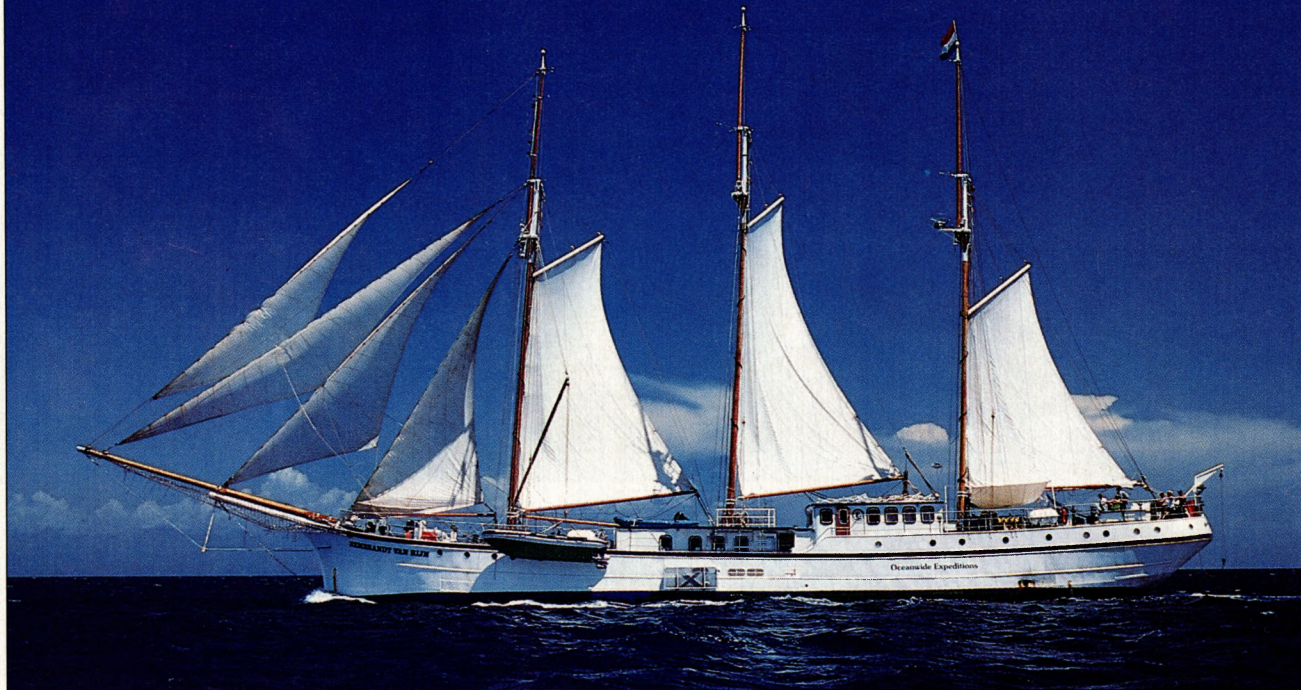
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The Rembrandt Van Rijn

Dive Cruise Belize on a Tall Ship

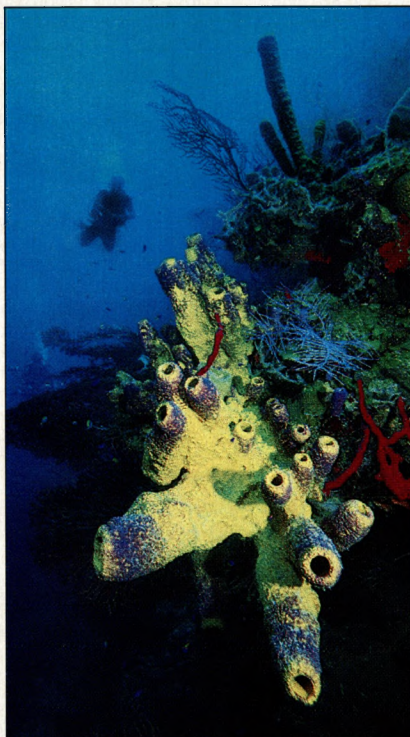


TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY WALT STEARNS

Dolphins! The call came as a sudden shock and before I knew it, I was bolting out the door, camera in hand, with everyone else. Reaching the foredeck, we were treated to the uplifting spectacle of a large pod of playful dolphins on an intercept course to catch a ride on our bow wake. Making use of the net suspended below *Rembrandt Van Rijn's* bowsprit, a few of us got a ringside seat to their high speed antics. To sailors of old, it was often considered a good omen to see dolphins during the outset of a voyage. Auspicious or not, watching their sleek gray bodies race in front of the *Rembrandt's* bow as we made way to Belize's famed Lighthouse Reef, I couldn't help but feel a great adventure awaited.

While Belize might be just a tiny speck on the global landscape, it is a vast center of natural beauty. Besides being well known for its teeming, colorful marine life, Belize is bestowed with the longest barrier reef in the western hemisphere. The system virtually runs the entire length of the country's 175 mile long coastline.

Sitting inside this extensive reef system, like the jewels in a lavish necklace, are some 450 verdant cayes. Along its brilliant blue border, many of these reefs take on their most dramatic nature. After gently sloping to depths of 30 to 45 feet, they drop straight away to a seemingly



Above: Light reflected off Branching Tube Sponges draws divers to the edge of a coral precipice. Top: Built in Holland in 1917, the 184 foot *Rembrandt Van Rijn* brings 20 divers to Belize's offshore reefs.

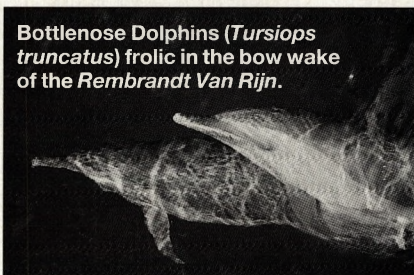
bottomless domain. Of course, this topography is not without numerous deep splits and crevices that meander through to the reef's outer edge. The most regarded of the "best that Belize has to offer" are the outlying coral precipices of Lighthouse Reef, Glover's Reef and the Turneffe Islands. To venture to any or all of the above can be like embarking on a high seas adventure.

By definition, the *Rembrandt*, measuring 184 feet in length with a mast height of more than 105 feet, is a Tall Ship. Built in Leiden Boot, Holland, in 1917, this Dutch registered three mast, gaff-topsail schooner was originally used in the North Sea as a fishing vessel. Some time around the mid 1920s, the steel hull, two-masted schooner was converted—twin diesels, a third mast and 25 feet were added to her mid section, for the role of hauling cargo. The whereabouts of the *Rembrandt* during the 30 year period between 1950 and 1980 are a mystery. This time in her history is somehow missing. Around 1991/92, she took on her most recent duties via Oceanwide Expeditions, as a passenger vessel geared toward providing both natural history tours and dive excursions throughout the Belizean coastline.

The *Rembrandt* can carry as many as 20 divers. Onboard accommodations



The *Rembrandt Van Rijn*'s sunlit social center, the main deck bar. The vessel samples Belize's best diving on every trip.



consist of 16 below deck, double occupancy cabins and one deluxe model behind the ship's bridge. The six staterooms toward the bow feature single upper and lower bunks, with the remaining 10 having twin size berths. All of the rooms come with one of the largest private shower and head compartments I have seen on a live-aboard. The deluxe model, up top, features a more spacious layout, with large windows flanking both the port and starboard sides of the cabin.

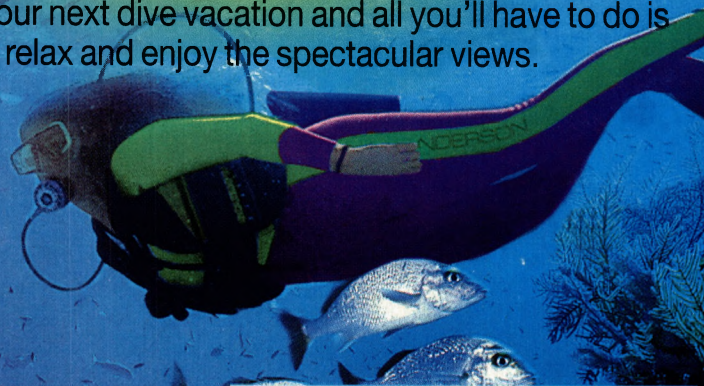
Onboard electrical power is provided by two 40 KVA generators, producing 220 volts at 50 cycles. All electrical outlets are European, so it is advisable to bring a converter and a few round, two pin style adapters. *Rembrandt's* on-board fresh water capacity is a whopping 9,000 gallons, with the ability to make an additional 1,200 gallons of fresh water daily. Cabins are provided with one set of towels, soap and a pil-

(Continued on Page 60)

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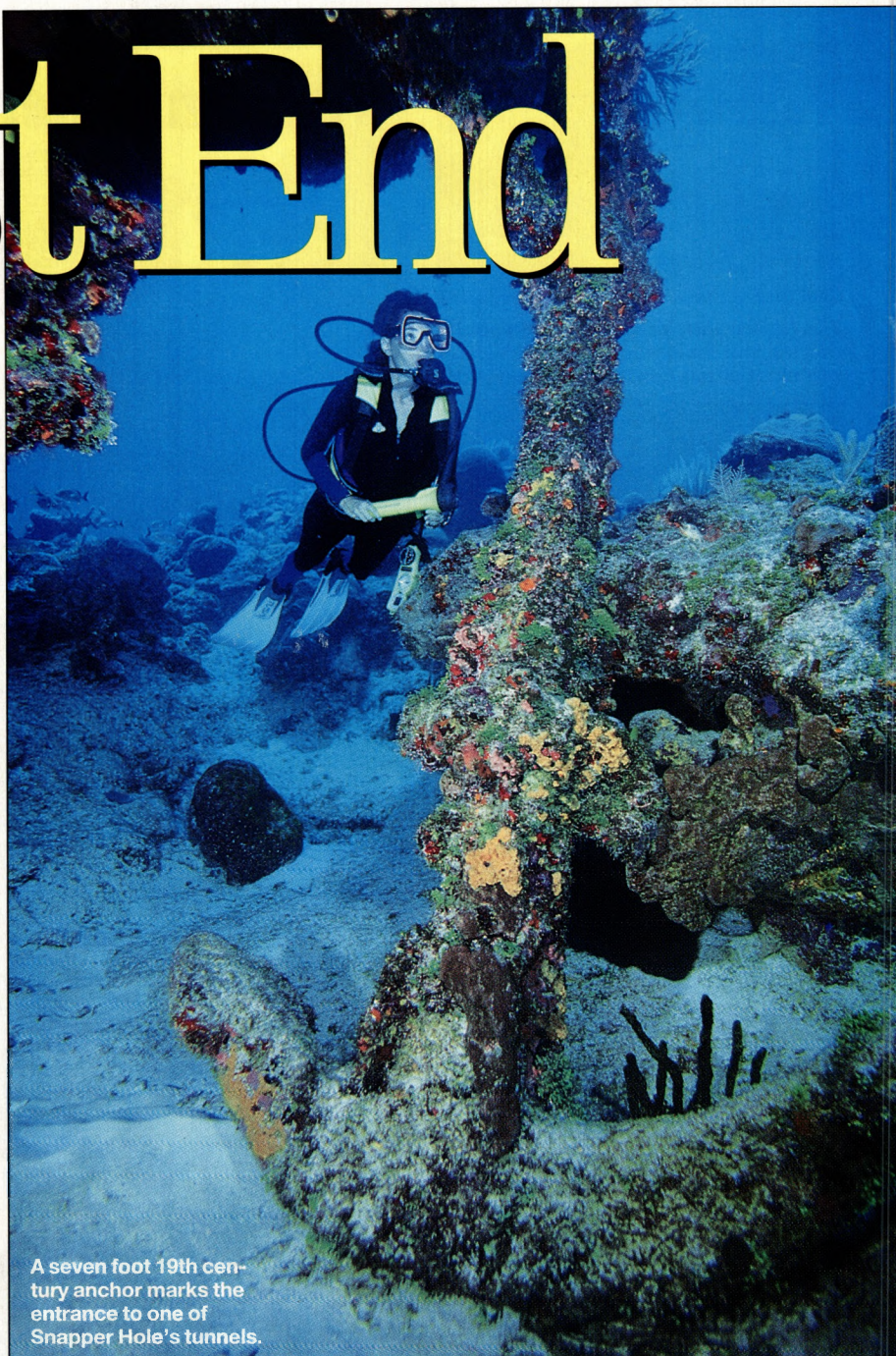
The East End

A Dive Guide to Grand Cayman's Beautiful and Wild Frontier

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY WALT STEARNS

It was the kind of day I love most in the Cayman Islands. The seas were running less than two feet and the underwater visibility appeared infinite. As I hovered over a site called Scuba Bowl, I could clearly see divers descending toward Jack McKennedy's Canyon on one side and Pat's Wall on the other. The distance between these two sites happens to be more than 400 feet. Unreal!

In contrast to the bright lights of George Town and Seven Mile Beach, East End has seen little change during the past 20 years. There are no shopping malls or fancy restaurants. The East End is a world apart, maintaining a remote and simple air. The only thing that seems to break the spell is the occasional automobile passing through the small communities of Gun Bay and Old Man Bay. Coming here to dive can often be a restful reprieve from the glitz of the modern, civilized world, yet it's only 22 miles from Seven Mile Beach and 19



A seven foot 19th century anchor marks the entrance to one of Snapper Hole's tunnels.



Tortuga Diver's Newton 42, Leatherback.



Ocean Frontiers' custom built, 38 foot Nauti-Cat.

from the airport, which translates to roughly 35 minutes by car.

THE DIVING

One of the most prominent characteristics of East End's diving is the sudden plunge of its drop-offs at 60 to 70 feet. Although some might consider that a hindrance (limiting bottom time), the majestic scale of these walls makes every minute well worth it.

The following are some of East End's finest sites (traveling east to west along the Southside). **Pat's Wall** is a bold, submarine cliff featuring a well rounded collection of deep, expansive ravines and undercuts with a tapestry of large sponges and gorgonians. Along with its

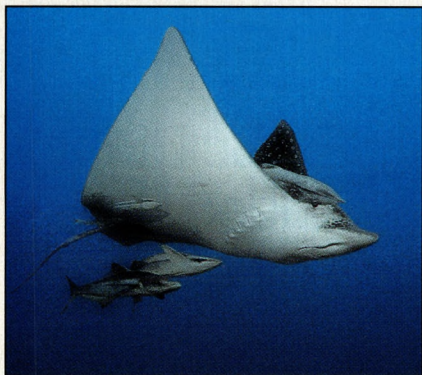
own collection of ravines and undercuts, **Scuba Bowl** also features one very immense, 50 foot wide crevasse, closer in appearance to an actual canyon. Just next door are **Jack McKennedy's Canyon** and **The Maze**, both presenting a series of long, deep, winding ravines that cut through the wall's crest. What is most interesting at The Maze is a large pinnacle concealed in the folds of a crevasse. The assortment of small and large gorgonians at both sites is stunning.

For pinnacles, **Three Sisters** is as good as any, with three magnificent, 60 foot high, monolithic structures along the drop-off's outer edge. Like huge Christmas trees adorned with decorations, each pinnacle is draped with a thick

growth of soft corals and long rope sponges in red, lavender and green. **Lost Wally** is a blend of just about everything, right down to a wall featuring a large canyon and two pinnacles.

A large part of East End's territory remains uncharted and untouched, giving it a virgin quality. Of the 20 plus miles of reefs and drop-offs that comprise East End, a mere 58 sites have been properly documented. There is almost certainly an equal number awaiting discovery.

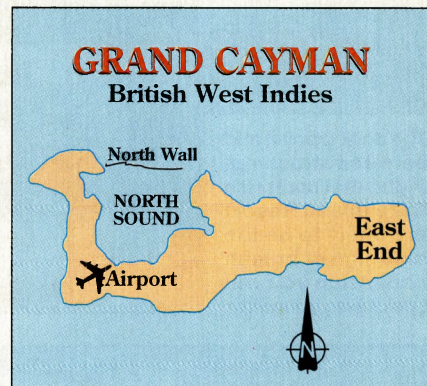
Enhancing the majestic topography is an abundant variety of fish life. It is common to see large schools of Creolefish, Bermuda Chubs, Black Durgons and small damsels all along a reef's crest. In places where the smaller fish congregate, it is rare not to see several Nassau, Tiger and Black Groupers or even one or two large Cubera Snappers prowling in the shadows. Nor is it uncommon to catch a glimpse of a small Blacktip or Caribbean Reef Shark cruising in the distance. Among the more visible, passing nomadic hunters are schooling Horse-eye Jacks, tuna and mackerel, in addi-



Above: Remoras find a mobile sanctuary in the aerodynamic form of a Spotted Eagle Ray (*Aetobatus narinari*). Below: Tarpon gleam in the shadow of a coral outcropping.



Above: East End's precipitous drop-offs are decorated with a colorful array of sponges. Below: The intimate Cayman Diving Lodge has an on-site dive operation with a dock and two 45 foot dive boats.



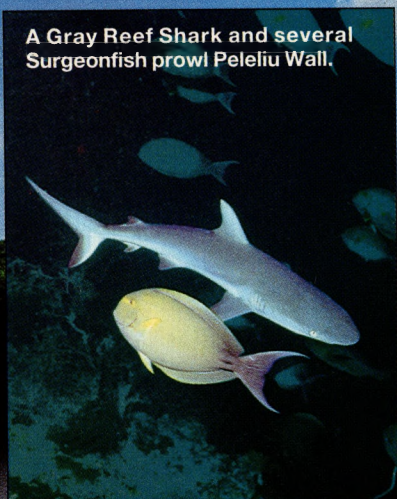
tion to a good number of Eagle Rays and Green or Hawksbill Turtles.

While its remoteness has helped the East End retain a virgin quality, its vivid beauty and abundant fish life are the results of its geographical position. The fortunate presence of light oceanic currents supply the region's sponge and coral communities with the nutrients beneficial for a healthy rate of growth. As a result, searods, seafans and Black Coral trees grow to robust sizes. As for the sponges, the words striking and vivid are apt. At sites such as **Mermaid's Point Drop-off**, **Babylon**, **McCurly's Drop-off** and **Black Rock Drop-off** on the northern corner of East End, red and orange vase sponges grow in uncommonly large clusters from Black Coral trees.

Another benefit of the current is good water clarity. While underwater visibility normally averages 100 feet, 200 is not uncommon. And, anything more than a one-half knot current is considered unusual.

When it comes to extraordinary reef formations inundated by huge, 30 foot

A Gray Reef Shark and several Surgeonfish prowl Peleliu Wall.



Palau Diving Center & Carp Island Resort

Exciting, Exotic Diving and a Secluded Rock Island Hideaway

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY AL HORNSBY

The twists and turns of fate, capricious as they may be, seem to make a habit of changing people's lives and leading them off in unexpected directions. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of Johnny Kishigawa, a young Japanese Navy diver who began his career in 1952.

A chance occurrence resulted in Johnny diving with world renowned diver Jacques Cousteau around the then largely unknown islands of Palau. The experience changed Johnny's life forever. Although he had spent hundreds of hours in the water as a military diver, he had never before seen the ocean's beauty and incredible natural wonders of Palau.

The coral reefs were magnificent, pristine and alive with color and life. The clear, warm waters were full of fish and other marine creatures of every description. On the outer walls of the reef that forms the huge Palauan lagoon, there were Pacific Gray Reef Sharks in surprising numbers, schools of Barracuda, huge Napoleon Wrasse and shimmering shoals of Horse-eye Jacks.

In the channels through the reef, gigantic Mantas cruised silently by, unafraid and unimpressed by the divers.

Around the delicate reef systems in the quiet waters inside the lagoon, clouds of damselfish and basslets of every color dipped and darted above pink-hued corals. And, in secluded nooks and crannies, the shier creatures were in evidence—here an octopus, there a moray eel, there a beautiful cowry shell.

For Johnny, the experience was one he could not put out of his mind. And, as has happened with many of today's well-known dive professionals, it wasn't long until the fascination of those beautiful days of diving led him to leave his career behind to embark on a new dream—to build a dive business and to spend his life discovering all the exotic underwater world had to offer.

Fortunately for divers wishing to discover the wonders of Palau themselves, Johnny found what he was



The dock (above) and barn-red structures (right) that comprise Carp Island Resort are likely to be the only sign of human habitation you will see during your stay.



Above: Blue Corner—an unparalleled and unspoiled congregation of life, shape and color. The diver need not move to enjoy a staggering exhibition of nature's variety. Right: A night dive at Big Drop-off reveals a Mole Cowrie (*Cypraea talpa*) with its spotted and oddly shaped mantle nearly fully exposed.

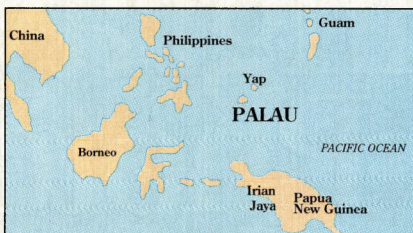


looking for. He opened Palau Diving Center and began exploring the hundreds of miles of reefs in the Palau archipelago. A true pioneer, he introduced intrepid Americans and Japanese to the exotic waters many years before Palau became known to the diving world.

Johnny's business grew steadily. In his home country, Johnny Kishigawa and his fabulous Palauan diving became well-known and Johnny, to this day, is regarded as one of Japan's true diving heroes and entrepreneurs.

Eighteen years ago, with a growing customer base and the desire to offer a different diving experience than that provided by the few hotels around Palau's main town of Koror, Johnny opened Carp Island Resort. On a Rock Island near most of Palau's famous dive sites, the resort gives guests the opportunity for short, quick trips to the reefs and a true, island-style get-away experience.

Today, Carp Island Resort is one of Palau's most popular accommodations,



able to comfortably serve up to 65 guests at a time, in double or single bungalows. Its long, meandering white sand beach and quiet seclusion make it an unique and enjoyable destination. And, with dive sites such as Blue Corner, German Channel and Big Drop-off just minutes away, there is plenty of time to make the standard two dives with lunch each day, plus spend leisurely hours sunbathing or snorkeling around Carp Island.

As the popularity of Palau diving has grown, so has the business of Palau Diving Center. Besides providing for its own guests at Carp Island Resort, the dive center also picks up guests staying in the many hotels around Koror. At the water's edge in Koror's harbor, Palau Diving Center is a bustling, well run operation that efficiently and comfortably handles up to 80 divers a day.

With three full time instructors and two certified divemasters on staff, led by head instructor Dexter Temengil, the dive center provides not only dive tours but also a wide range of instructional programs, with PADI, NAUI and JP (Japanese) certifications available. Based on Johnny's belief that people who discover the joys of diving with his dive program will be the best long term customers, the staff conducts a large

(Continued on Page 126)



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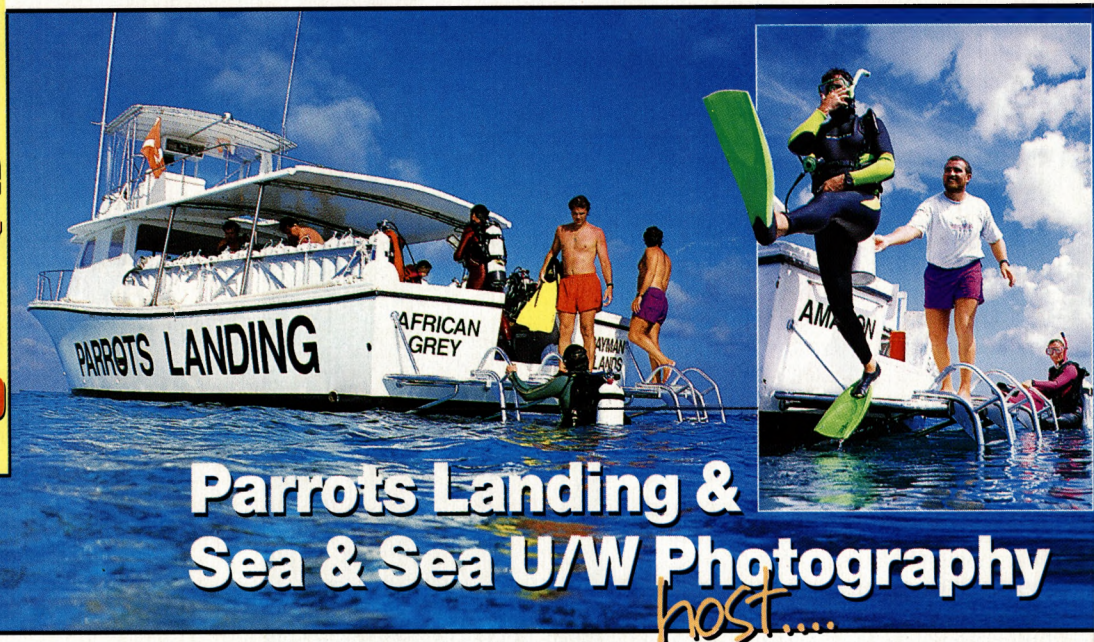
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PARROTS LANDING
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SEA & SEA

The Stingray Photo Round-up

September thru December 1996



Parrots Landing & Sea & Sea U/W Photography host....

One dive at Stingray City and you'll never look at stingrays the same way again. When you enter the water, they come to you like puppies eager to play. Keep a scrap of squid in your closed fist and three or four rays will follow you anywhere. Put your hand over your head and you look like you're tossing stingray pizza dough as they spin around searching for the bait. Soon you give them the food, of course, and they give you an incredible close-up look at the Southern Stingray (*Dasyatis americana*). You'll see how they fly through the water, how they breathe and how they eat. You get to feel the smoothness of their white undersides and the roughness of their battleship gray backs. You can touch the horny tubercles that run down the centers of their backs and you feel the muscles they use to flap their wing-like pectoral fins.

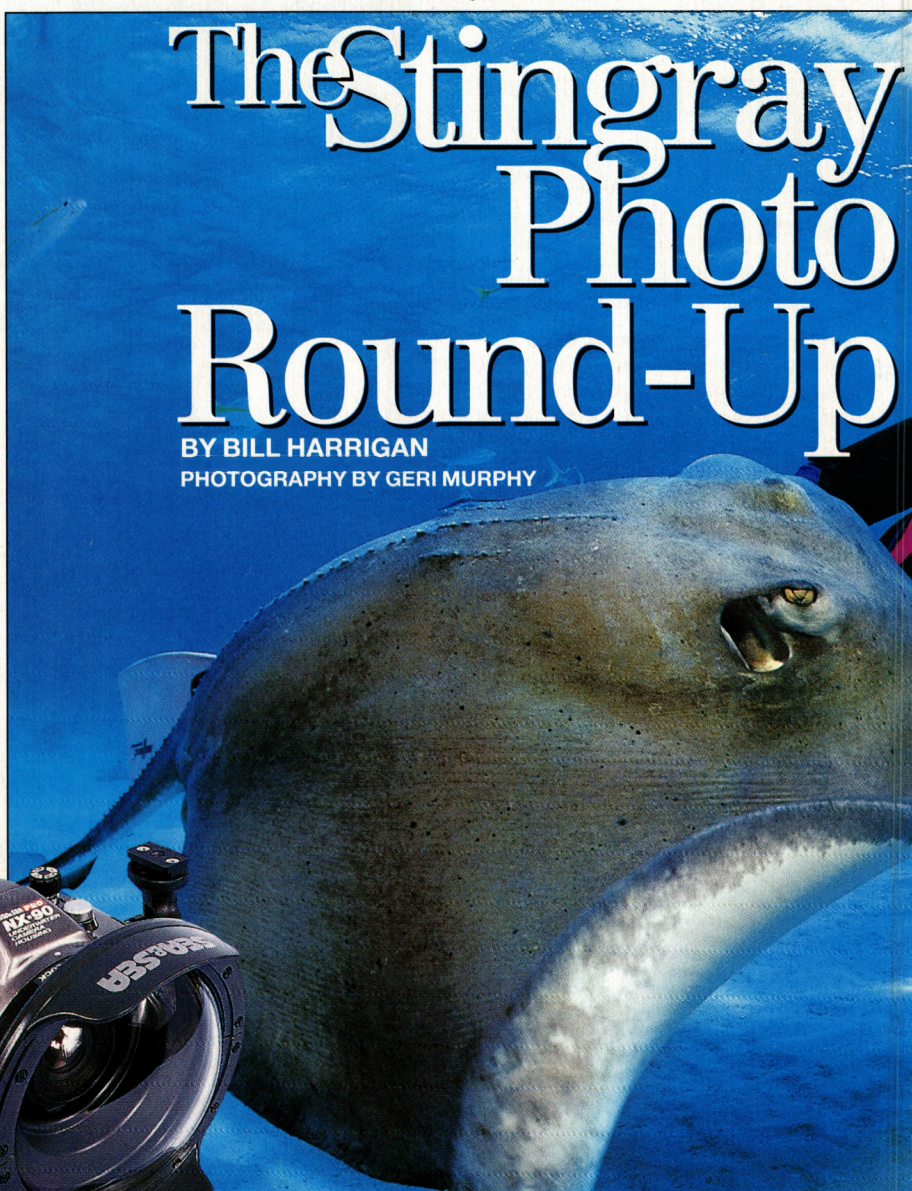
Stingray City is an exciting and enlightening experience you will never forget. And now there's an additional reason to dive there. Parrots Landing and Sea & Sea are sponsoring a truly unique contest called the Stingray Photo Round-up. It is designed, first and foremost, to be fun. Everyone, from neophyte to accomplished amateur photographer, can win one of the many prizes. You don't even have to be a diver to enter—snorkelers are welcome, too.

The Stingray Photo Round-up is easy to enter and easy to win. Besides being great fun, the event features \$25,000 in prizes such as the NX-90 housing (inset right) and the Motormarine II-EX camera (inset opposite).



The Stingray Photo Round-Up

BY BILL HARRIGAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY



The latest in fashionable dive accessories—the stingray bonnet. This photo captures the whimsy of these charming creatures.



Left: A closeup view of the elegant, streamlined star of the photo round-up. Left lower: Divers Supply carries a complete line of Sea & Sea U/W photography equipment. Below: In between photo shoots many divers enjoy Parrots Landing's exciting and easy access shore diving.



photos Bill Harrigan



Parrots Landing photo pro, Lois Hatcher, uses a Sea & Sea MX-10 camera with YS-40 strobe to photograph a Southern Stingray (*Dasyatis americana*) at Stingray City.

photo Bill Harrigan

You'll be amazed at how easy it is to get great photos at Stingray City. The bright sunlight, shallow water, excellent visibility and exciting action with friendly stingrays combine to produce exceptional photo opportunities. You can enter one of two contest categories—Sport or Pro.

SPORT CATEGORY: Never taken an underwater photograph before? Enter in the Sport category and you can win a prize with your first roll. This category is for photographers with the easy to use Sea & Sea MX-10 camera. This uncomplicated camera produces high quality photos. It has a sharp, focus-free lens and automatic film loading, advance and rewind. The built-in flash and sensitive exposure meter can give you brilliant results. For best results, use the MX-10 with the accessory YS-40 strobe. It attaches directly to the camera and provides lighting that reduces the chance of backscatter. Another Sea & Sea accessory that will be useful for the Stingray Photo Round-up is the 20mm lens. Its bayonet mount allows you to attach it over the normal lens. With this lens, you simply estimate your distance, approximately one arm's length from your subject, and fire away. With the MX-10 you've got a simple, point and shoot wide angle U/W camera system that will give you great shots of divers interacting with stingrays!

If you don't already own an MX-10, you can buy or rent one on Grand Cayman. Divers Supply, Grand Cayman's Sea & Sea Seamaster Pro dealer, has a full line of this company's products, from the MX-10 to the sophisticated SX-1000 SLR housing system. Parrots Landing will have an expanded selection of Sea & Sea cameras and accessories on hand during the contest. Even if you are completely new to photography, you can handle the

MX-10. One of the photo pros will load the camera for you, show you how to use it and remove the film when you bring the camera back.

PRO CATEGORY: More experienced photographers can compete in the Pro category, which allows the use of more sophisticated equipment. A Sea & Sea camera, lens or strobe must be used but can be combined with other types of photo equipment. For instance, a Nikonos V camera and 35mm lens with a Sea & Sea 16mm wide angle conversion lens can be used with any strobe. Or, a housed camera of any make could be used, provided it is combined with a Sea & Sea YS-50, YS-120 or YS-300 strobe. The Motormarine II and Motormarine II-EX cameras may be used in the Pro category.

EASY TO ENTER AND WIN

So, here is how it works. You go to Grand Cayman, pop into the nearest contest location, pick up an entry pack, pay for film and processing in advance and head out to Stingray City or Sandbar with Parrots Landing. You get blown away by the rays, photograph them with a Sea & Sea camera, or any component of the Sea & Sea system, and bring the film back to where you started. After the film is developed, you pick one photo and submit it for judging. Simple, isn't it?

Entry packs can be obtained at five locations on Grand Cayman, including the Parrots Landing Watersports Park on South Church Street, Divers Supply at the Westshore Centre, Calico Jack's Pirate's Emporium on North Church Street, Parrots Landing's satellite dive shop at Coconut Harbour Resort and aboard *Cockatoo*, the Parrots Landing catamaran. The packs include film, processing at Cayman Camera and contest registration. Sport entry packs will con-

STINGRAY PHOTO ROUND-UP

tain print film; Pro packs, slide film.

Enter as many times as you want but only one entry pack can be purchased per person on each trip and only one photo can be submitted from each entry pack. The contest will run from September 5 through December 31, 1996. Sorry folks, professional photographers and Cayman Islands dive operators' staffs are not eligible to enter. One representative from Parrots Landing, Sea &

Sea and SKIN DIVER Magazine will make up the judges' panel. Judging will take place at the Diving Equipment and Marketing Association (DEMA) show in Orlando, Florida, in January 1997.

A TON OF PRIZES

Just the fun of photographing the action at Stingray City makes the contest worth entering but there is also an incredible lineup of prizes, with a total value of more than \$25,000. Grand prize in the Pro category includes a seven night Parrots Landing Dive Vacation for two with air transportation by Cayman

Airways and accommodations at Coconut Harbour; a Sea & Sea NX-90 Pro housing for the Nikon N90; an 800 foot dive on Atlantis Submarines' Research Submersible; a framed and matted print of your winning photograph; and a stingray T-shirt. That's an incredible prize, worth about \$5,000! Even more incredible, a similar grand prize will be awarded in the Sport category. However, a Motor-marine II-EX Seamaster Pro Camera System with Pelican Case will be awarded in this category instead of the NX-90 housing and accommodations are at the Sleep Inn. First, second, third and ten honorable



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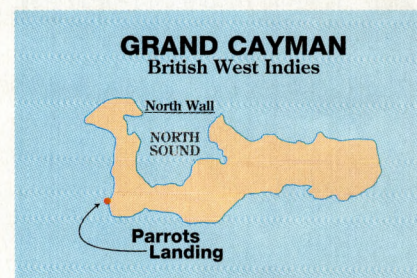
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mention prizes will be awarded for best stingray, best stingray with diver and funniest stingray in each category. Among the booty to be given out are three Sea & Sea MX-10 camera/strobe kits, three Sea & Sea YS-120 strobes, 30 *Complete Guide to Sea & Sea* books and 30 Sea & Sea baseball caps. Quality products from other manufacturers will be awarded as well, including an Oceanic dive computer, Citizen dive watches, Sea Quest dive gear, a Scubapro Mark 20/D400 regulator and two Diveskins suits. Many other prizes are being provided by Parrots Landing, Divers Supply, Calico Jack's, Cathy Holder Designs, Blue Water Photographic Lab, Cayman Screen Print and

SKIN DIVER Magazine. The road to all these riches starts at Parrots Landing in Grand Cayman.

PARROTS LANDING WATERSPORTS PARK

Known as Shark House in the early 1800s, Parrots Landing was once a depot for provisioning catboats used to catch turtles. The Parrots Landing Watersports Park opened in 1988 and is one of the finest waterfront dive operations on Grand Cayman. Overlooking a beautiful section of the marine park, the grounds feature almond trees, tall casaurina trees and several different species of parrots, both wild and domestic. Shore diving is easy with a concrete landing and sturdy ladders to facilitate entry and exit. Lounge chairs and picnic tables are situated around the property for relaxing before and after dives. The main building houses a large retail dive store, including an extensive photo/video center. Parrots Landing's photo pro, Lois Hatcher, is a talented photographer and teacher, so whether you want a custom video of your diving or help in taking your own photographs, she is the person to see. Lois is one of the Stingray Photo Contest coordinators and will give you excellent advice on how to photograph the rays.

A lot of words could be used to describe the Parrots Landing staff, including personable, talented and dedicated; however, versatile is probably the best description. The 16 instructors can handle PADI, NAUI, SSI and Handicapped Scuba Association certifications.

Versatility also extends to the Parrots Landing dive boats, a fleet of seven custom vessels with a wide range of capabilities. At the heart of the fleet are two 45 foot Garcias, comfortable boats outfitted with sundecks and freshwater showers. A fast Pro 42 jet drive dive boat carries a maximum of 16 divers and features an open transom for easy entries. Four boats in the 28 to 34 foot range give Parrots Landing flexibility in planning dive trips. For instance, one boat can be dedicated as an advanced computer boat to allow groups of qualified divers the opportunity to utilize the full potential of their computers. Any one of the boats can also be used for the all day, three tank safari boat, an adventure for experienced divers that ranges as far as the weather will allow.

The versatility of these dive boats is enhanced by the Parrots Landing policy of letting the customers select the dive site to the maximum extent possible. The captain sets the trip's itinerary after finding out what the divers aboard would like to do. Of course, practical matters such as weather and time have to be considered.

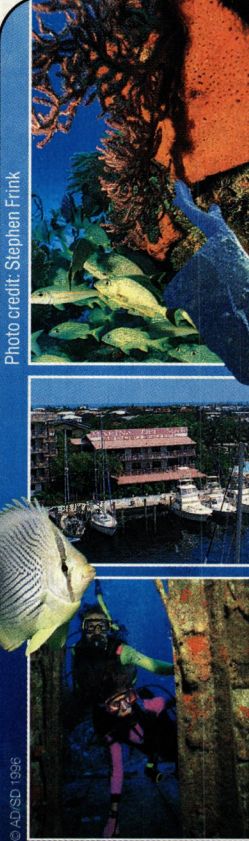
(Continued on Page 144)

Photo credit: Stephen Frink

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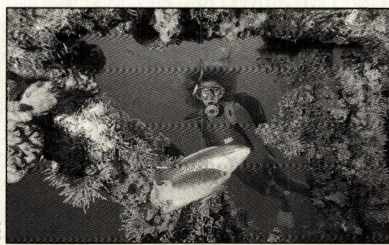
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Palau Aggressor II

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A 100 foot long catamaran with a 30 foot beam, *Palau Aggressor II* carries 16 divers to exciting reefs and walls.

BY BONNIE J. CARDONE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY



While known for wide angle photo opportunities (above), Palau offers myriad macro creatures, such as leaffish (below).



photo/Bonnie J. Cardone

As we dropped off the skiff into the clear waters of **Blue Corner**, two Napoleon Wrasse came up to meet us. We took photos of them as they swam lazily among us but, anticipating what lay ahead, we were loathe to expend too much film; we had bigger fish to fry—so to speak! One buddy team was photographing a turtle below me, others were heading for the reef's "corner," the inspiration for the site's name. Although Blue Corner is noted for its heavy currents, on this dive and two others my group would make here, there was absolutely none. This meant the action was more leisurely but it was still wonderful. When we arrived at the corner, we found one Gray Reef Shark swimming 'round and 'round in a school of smaller fish on top of the reef. Off the wall, two or three more Gray Reefs cruised by. When I ran low on air and ascended, I swam into a school of Barracuda hanging just below the surface.

Palau remains my favorite dive destination and I can think of no better way to see it than aboard the *Palau Aggressor II*. She's a 110 foot long catamaran with a beam of 30 feet, a cruising speed of 25 knots and a passenger capacity of 16. Launched just two years ago, she is air-conditioned throughout and has all of the amenities divers have come to expect from the Aggressor Fleet—and more.

Fresh water, for instance. With two watermakers and storage capacity of 2,000 gallons, guests can be assured of salt free bodies and equipment!

The eight private staterooms on the main deck are carpeted and have individually controlled air-conditioning, a queen sized bed with an upper, single bunk, a vanity, head and shower. Tastefully decorated in pastels, each also has a large window.

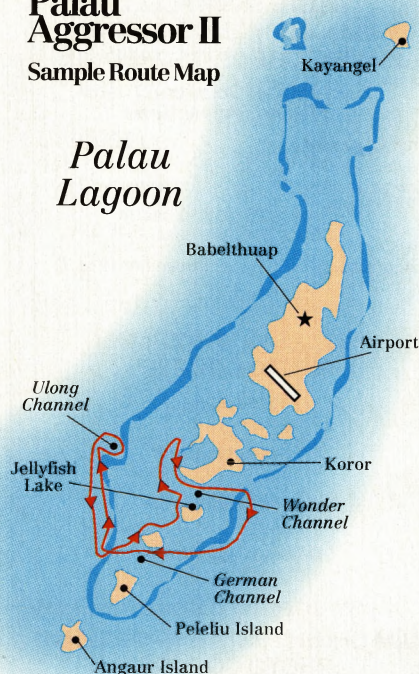
The spacious main salon on the upper deck also contains the galley, bar, lounge and entertainment center. Meals are looked-forward-to "events," served buffetstyle here. Carefully prepared and attractively presented, the cuisine is varied and abundant. Snacks are served between dives.

The dive deck has racks for hanging dive suits and a freshwater shower for quick, after dive rinses. There is also a freshwater rinse barrel for cameras and a two tiered, carpeted camera table (gathering place for U/W photographers between dives).

As with the other vessels in the Aggressor Fleet, the *Palau Aggressor II* has full sets of very well maintained scuba equipment for rental. This provides the perfect excuse for leaving your own gear at home and traveling light.

Many divers like to make a vacation a learning experience. The *Palau Aggres-*

Palau Aggressor II Sample Route Map



Aggressor II offers most PADI specialties. U/W photography, for instance. Rent everything you need, take home some great pictures of your trip and earn a photo specialty as well. Since there's E-6 film processing on board, you can check your progress daily.

Diving in Palau is among the 340 Rock Islands, the channels that have been dredged through them as short cuts for boat traffic and off walls on the western side of this island nation. The water is often very shallow among the Rock Islands and the *Palau Aggressor II*'s four and a foot draft is very convenient. However, because of the currents many of the wall dives are done as drifts and it is easier to deploy and pickup divers using the *Palau Aggressor II*. This little dynamo is really neat. Thirty feet long, she is powered by twin Volvo diesels and Hamilton waterjets. She can cruise at an incredible 50 knots. There are ladders on each side for easy water exits; a canopy shades guests on board. Nestled in an hydraulic crane in between dives, the *Palau Aggressor II* is boarded on the dive deck and then lowered into the water. After each dive she is raised to the dive deck and guests merely step off. Everyone's gear is loaded onto the *II* on the first day and stays there for the rest of the trip.

THE DIVE SITES

The water temperature in Palau averages 84°F. Every site I visited was outstanding but some were just a little more special. Although known for its big fish, there are plentiful macro creatures as

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SINK DIVER SEPTEMBER 1996 47

PALAU AGGRESSOR II

well. At **Turtle Cove** I saw and photographed my first leafish, a gold colored lovely. I had taken several shots of it before I noticed another nearby, possible the mate of the first.

Everyone talks about **Jellyfish Lake** and it is most definitely a must-see. I takes a hike through a Rock Island jungle to get there, thus you snorkel rather than dive it. The lake is filled with an estimated two million jellyfish, which have lost the

ability to sting. The pulsating creatures follow the sun, navigating across the lake and back. Finning the surface of Jellyfish Lake, you'll feel as if you've found a long lost world!

Big Drop-off, visited on a sunny day, was beautiful. The wall starts as shallow at 2 feet and drops to 600. The colorful soft corals, schools of Pyramid Butterflyfish and clear, clear blue water are recorded forever in my memory.

SPECIAL TRIPS

The *Palau Aggressor II* hosts several extraordinary cruises. There's a Jean-Michel

AGGRESSOR FLEET/ JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU L'AVENTURE 1996 SCHEDULE

Jean-Michel Cousteau Team/
Nikonos Adventures

<i>Truk Aggressor II</i>	October 6 to 13
<i>Palau Aggressor II</i>	October 13 to 20
<i>Kona Aggressor II</i>	November 2 to 9

Project Ocean Search

<i>Galapagos Aggressors I & II</i>	December 12 to 22
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1997 STAN WATERMAN PHOTO COURSES

Bay Islands Aggressor III
January 18 to 25

Kona Aggressor II
May 31 to June 7

Okeanos Aggressor
June 19 to 29

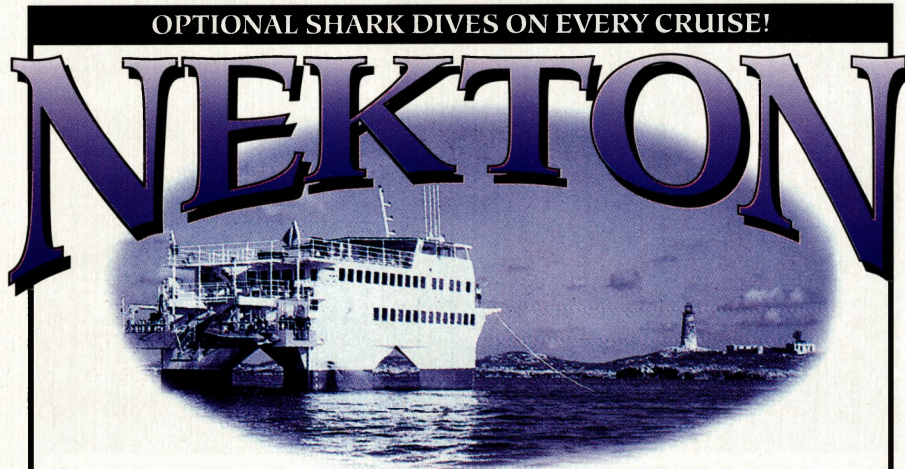
Cayman Aggressor III
July 19 to 26

JIM CHURCH/STAN WATERMAN PHOTO COURSES

Palau Aggressor II
April 20 to 27, 1997
April 27 to May 4, 1997
October 5 to 12, 1997

Truk Aggressor II
April 13 to 20, 1997
May 4 to 11, 1997
October 12 to 19, 1997

Okeanos Aggressor
September 26 to October 6, 1996



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Vessel	Length	# Divers	Cruise Length	Price*
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<i>Belize Aggressor II/III</i> Belize	110'	18	6 days	\$1,495/ \$1,595
<i>Cayman Aggressor III</i> Cayman Islands	110'	17	6 days	\$1,495
<i>Galapagos Aggressors I/II</i> Ecuador	80'	14	6 to 10 days (6 days)	\$2,195 (6 days)
<i>Kona Aggressor II</i> Hawaii	80'	10	6 days	\$1,695
<i>Okeanos Aggressor</i> Costa Rica	120'	21	10 days	\$2,695
<i>Palau Aggressor II</i> Palau	110'	16	6 days	\$1,995
<i>Truk Aggressor II</i> Truk Lagoon	110'	14	6 days	\$1,895
<i>Turks & Caicos Aggressor</i> Turks & Caicos	100'	16	6 days	\$1,495

*Special cruises, such as those with Jean-Michel Cousteau, Stan Waterman or Jim Church, cost more but there are also cruises offered at discount rates—ask when you book!

Cousteau Team/Nikonos Adventure from October 13 to 20 this year and three Jim Church/Stan Waterman photo courses next year. Any of them offers the vacation of a lifetime—great diving, incredible company and a very special learning experience.

GETTING THERE

Palau is not exactly on the beaten path but getting there isn't hard (it takes about 14 hours from the U.S. West Coast, however). You fly Continental Micronesia to
(Continued on Page 144)

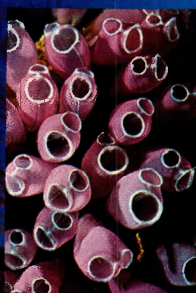
Wild Things

Tucked in a corner of the western Caribbean are the incredible Bay Islands of Honduras – emerald islands rising from a turquoise sea. Just offshore are stunning coral gardens and a continuous range of undersea mountains. Here divers will find an amazing display of marine life, more than 60 species of stony corals and the widest selection of sponges imaginable.



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Central America



BAY ISLANDS AGGRESSOR III
Bay Islands, Honduras



CAYMAN AGGRESSOR III
George Town, Grand Cayman



TURKS & CAICOS AGGRESSOR
Provo, Turks & Caicos



PALAU AGGRESSOR II
Koro, Republic of Palau

CRUISE ACTIVITY CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 1996

Cayman Islands -
Scott Frier
Coco Island -
Stan Waterman
and Jim Church

OCTOBER 1996

Cayman Islands -
Dr. Marcus Laux
Palau -
Jean-Michel Cousteau
Nikonos Adventures
Truk -
Jean-Michel Cousteau
Nikonos Adventures

NOVEMBER 1996

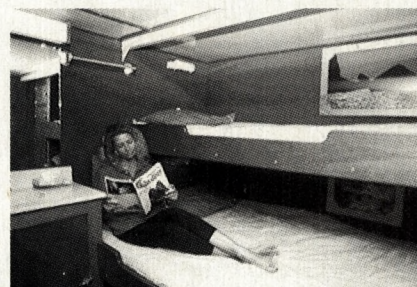
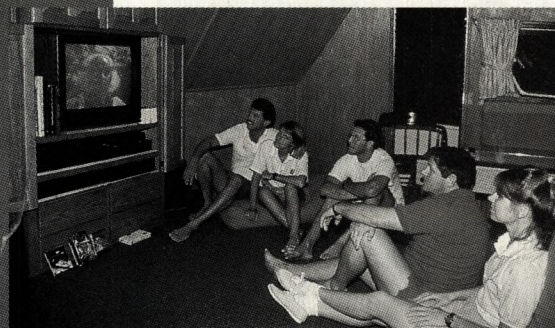
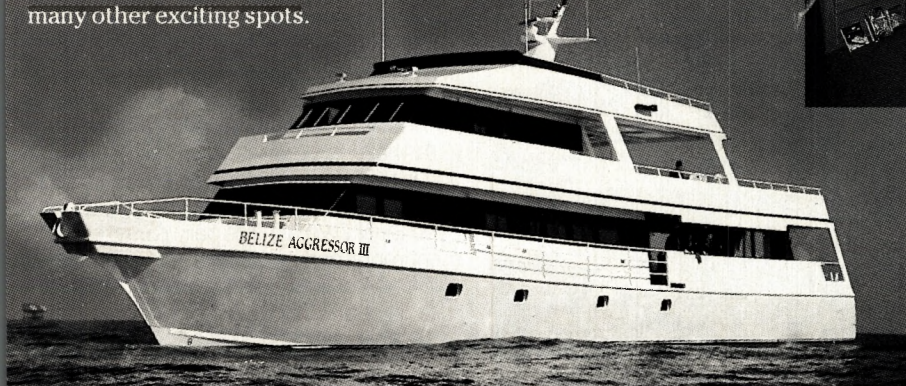
Kona -
Jean-Michel Cousteau
Nikonos Adventures

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Sinai Divers

Red Sea Pioneers



war. Operating out of little more than a shed in those days, they offered daily shore dives along the rugged coastline by Jeep. How things have changed! Today Sinai Divers, based at the Ghazala Hotel, has five day boats, four world-class live-aboards, a superb dive school offering every conceivable course from both PADI and SSI, a complete line of top quality rental gear and a well equipped photo and video center.

DAILY DIVING SERVICES

At the heart of the Sinai Divers operation is the dive center at the Ghazala Hotel in Na'ama Bay. From this well equipped base Sinai Divers offers daily dives, equipment rental and photo and video services. The photo center is fairly new and offers camera rentals, courses and fast film processing. A staff photo pro can also record your dive on video, producing a superb souvenir of your Red Sea diving experience. The Sinai Divers Dive School offers a complete array of instruction from beginner to divemaster, along with most specialties and, in keeping with the international flavor of Sinai Divers, courses can be taught in English, French, Italian, Spanish or German!

Each morning the boats gather at the nearby jetty to transport divers to some of the most magical sites in the world. However, unlike so many other destinations around the world, these are leisurely experiences aboard comfortable sea going vessels developed from traditional fishing

(Continued on Page 72)

Left: A diver herds a multitude of Dwarf Sweepers through the coral wonderland of Ras Um Syd. Below: Over the years, soft and hard corals have accumulated on the massive propeller of the *Dunraven* and transformed the structure into a living reef.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTIN J. SUTTON

A *mezze* is an intriguing assortment of oriental dishes served at the beginning of a meal in Egypt. The dishes complement each other with contrasting colors, flavors and textures to please everyone at the table. In many ways the Red Sea is similar to a *mezze*, for it, too, serves up many contrasting, colorful and exciting experiences that leave no scuba diver unsatisfied. The Red Sea is considered by many to offer the finest diving in the world; with walls that begin at the surface, incredibly clear water and a dizzying parade of spectacular marine life, it is easy to agree.

When visiting the Red Sea today, there are a vast number of operations to choose from but one stands out from the crowd. With a wide range of services, top of the line boats and, perhaps more than anything else, the greatest experience of anyone in the area, Sinai Divers is the compa-

ny to choose when diving the Red Sea.

Headed by Rolf Schmidt and Petra Roeglin, Sinai Divers is one of the longest established of all Red Sea dive shops. It is based in Na'ama Bay, part of the cosmopolitan town of Sharm el Sheikh, at the tip of the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt. The surface topography is austere: desert sands combine with jagged granite mountains to form a monotone landscape that seems to have more in common with the surface of the moon than a tourist Mecca on earth. Yet, over the past 25 years, Rolf and Petra have seen this unlikely region change from a seldom visited outpost hosting a few hardy divers to a sophisticated tourist boomtown exhibiting all the style and elegance of the French Riviera.

Rolf and Petra began their business during the '70s when the Sinai was occupied by the Israelis in the wake of the 1973



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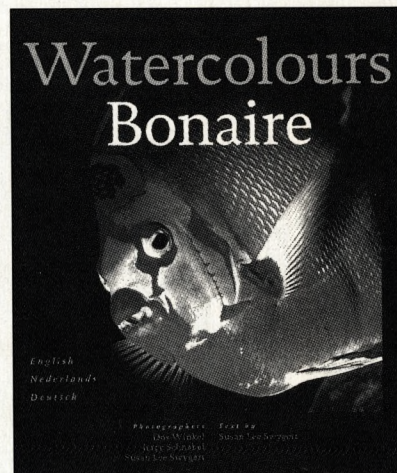


Discover
the Riches
of the Deep
with
skindiver

WATERCOLOURS BONAIRE

BY TAMARA COLLINS

A book you can proudly display should not only be beautiful to look at, it should be filled with intriguing, informative text as well. In *Watercolours Bonaire*, Dos Winkel, Jerry Schnabel and Susan Lee Swygert have brilliantly captured the aesthetic element through



photography; Swygert is eloquent and educational in her overview of the island, its coral reefs and marine inhabitants. The armchair dive traveler can take a vicarious journey to the Caribbean island of Bonaire, viewing beautiful photographs of the underwater environment and its splendid inhabitants. Given Bonaire's ties to the Netherlands, Susan has included text in English, Dutch and German. This artfully designed 10½ by 10½ inch hard cover book would grace any ocean lover's coffee table.

Watercolours will remind the dive traveler who has been to Bonaire of its breathtaking underwater vistas and intriguing creatures. Those who have not had the good fortune to visit this island will be irresistibly drawn to its reefs and shores. Out of 175 pages, more than 125 are entirely devoted to colorful photographs of Bonaire's marine scenery and creatures, from very large, pelagic creatures to the tiniest inhabitants. The photos are divided by color into four sections; Blue, Yellow, Violet and Orange. Each reef scene or creature is identified and, at the back of the book, there is further information about each picture. Particular dive sites are described in brief and the common and scientific names of the marine creatures are given, along with a summary of the creature's distinctive features and behaviors.

Watercolours Bonaire is available through Helix for \$59.50, including UPS anywhere in the continental U.S. Call Helix at (800) 33-HELIX for more information. 🐟

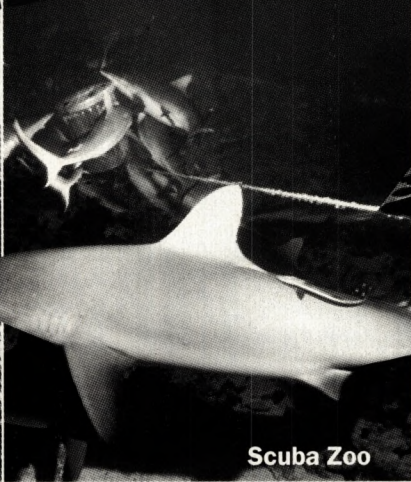
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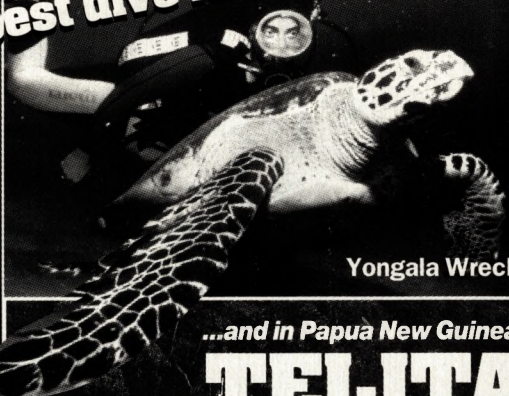
Aboard Spoilsport to the Coral Sea's best dive locations!

A black and white photograph showing a diver in a wetsuit and mask swimming over a large sea turtle. The turtle is swimming towards the right, and the diver is positioned above it, looking down. The background is dark and indistinct.

Mike Ball



Scuba Zoo



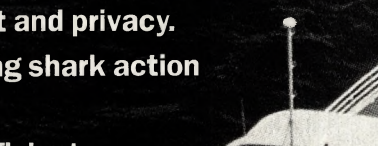
Yongala Wreck

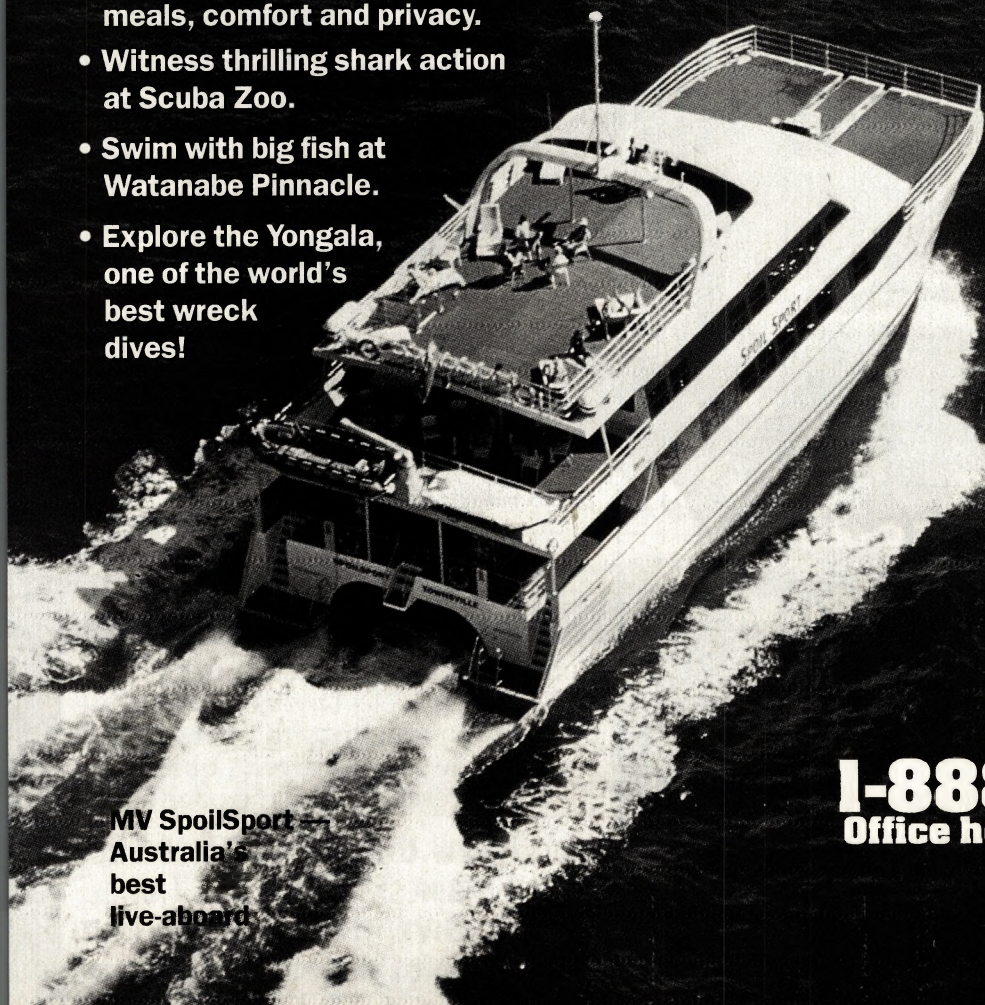
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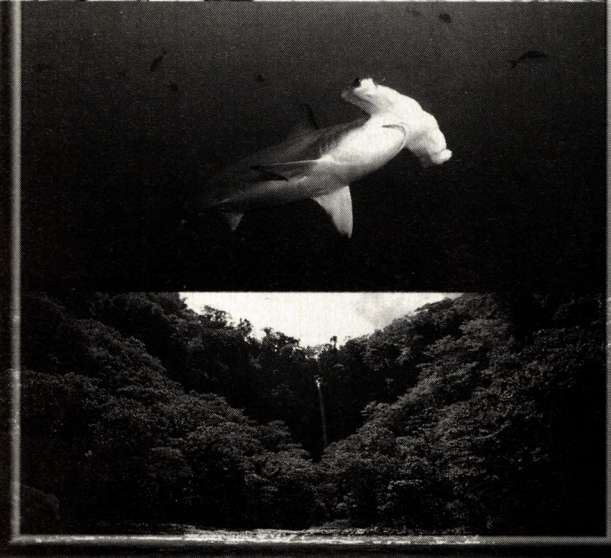
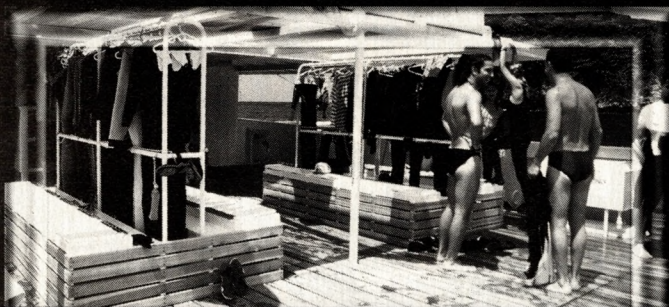
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<i>Coral Sea - 6 days</i>		
Supersport	\$ 696	\$ 624
<i>Cod Hole - 3 days</i>		
Watersport	\$ 365	\$ 335
<i>Yongala Wreck - 2 days</i>		
Telita <i>Papua New Guinea</i>		
<i>7 nights</i>	\$1,980	
<i>10 nights</i>	\$2,970	
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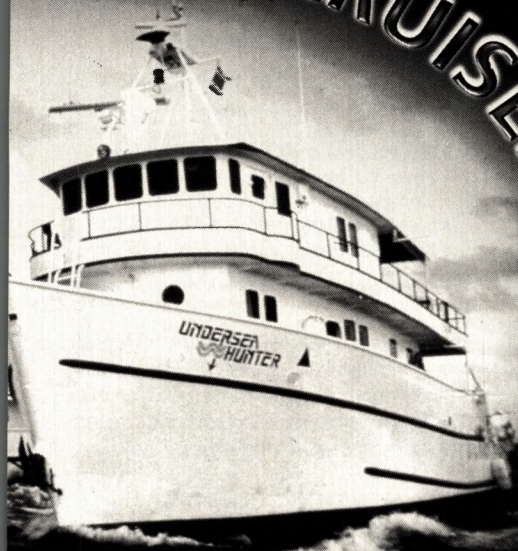
Red Sea/Sudan



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SEA QUEST XR2 REGULATOR

(Continued from Page 16)

precision.

XR2 SECOND STAGE: This highly advanced breathing technology is incorporated into a durable, compact, lightweight and innovative low profile design. Air is delivered via a downstream demand valve. Owing to the reduced internal airspace of this micro-sized regulator, purging is remarkably easy and, with the large exhaust tee, exhalation is effortless. The compact size and streamlined design also help reduce jaw fatigue. Additionally, the XR2 incorporates an exceptionally comfortable, orthodontically engineered black silicone Comfo-Bite mouthpiece that further reduces jaw fatigue by securing the mouthpiece in the most natural position within the mouth.

The exhaust tee is angled to guide exhalations back and away from the face. The purge valve has a soft, rubber-like covering for easy purging and long wear.

CENTURY FIRST STAGE: With an environmentally sealed, balanced piston design, the Century first stage is made to withstand the rigorous demands of cold water diving and hard use, all while delivering air effortlessly. The oil filled ambient pressure chamber provides a barrier for the internal mechanisms against foreign

contaminants such as silt and sand. It also helps prevent freeze-up in extremely cold water. The Century first stage has two HP ports. The four LP ports are on a 360 degree rotating swivel. This feature allows perfect positioning of all your hoses components.

Additionally, the XR2 comes stan-

OPTIONAL ADD-ONS

- Eon Lux computer\$960
- Eon console.....\$900
- Eon computer.....\$850
- Solution console*\$630 to \$750
- Favor console*\$450 to \$570
- Companion console*\$290 to \$410
- Mechanical gauges*\$176 to \$230
- XR2 Octopus.....\$155

*Price range depends upon number and configuration of gauges/instruments. All prices reflect hose mounted systems only.

dard with a three-eighths inch Pulsair hose, which has unusually high flow characteristics and is extremely flexible, strong and resistant to cuts or scrapes. Hose protectors are included.

CONCLUSION

High performance environments demand high performance gear—cold water, heavy use and deep diving all require a sturdy, rugged and reliable breathing apparatus that will deliver air confidently. Likewise, everyday recreational use demands total assurance. The Sea Quest XR2 encompasses all those needs in

COMPARISON OF SEA QUEST REGULATORS

	XR2/Century	XR7/Spectrum	XR2/Infinity	XP/Century	XP/Spectrum	XP/Infinity	Mirage XP
Price	\$410	\$380	\$365	\$340	\$315	\$290	\$200
Internal Design	Balanced piston	Balanced diaphragm	Balanced piston	Balanced piston	Balanced diaphragm	Balanced piston	Flow-through piston
External Design	L-shaped, LP ports swivel 360 degrees	T-shaped	L-shaped, LP ports swivel 360 degrees	L-shaped, LP ports swivel 360 degrees	T-shaped	L-shaped, LP ports swivel 360 degrees	Cylindrical
HP/LP Ports	2 HP/4 LP	2 HP/4 LP	2 HP/4 LP	2 HP/4 LP	2 HP/4 LP	2 HP/4 LP	1 HP/4 LP
Environmental Seal	Yes	Yes; with additional optional	Optional	Yes	Yes; with additional optional	Optional	Optional
Hose Diameter	3/8"	3/8"	3/8"	3/8"	3/8"	3/8"	3/8"
Case/Cover	Fiberglass reinforced polyester with rubber	Fiberglass reinforced polyester	Fiberglass reinforced polyester	Fiberglass reinforced polyester with rubber	Fiberglass reinforced polyester	Fiberglass reinforced polyester	Fiberglass reinforced polyester
Valve Design	Downstream lever action	Downstream lever action	Downstream lever action	Downstream lever action	Downstream lever action	Downstream lever action	Downstream lever action
Air Exhaust	Under chin	Under chin	Under chin	Under chin	Under chin	Under chin	Under chin
Exhaust Valve	Extra large round silicone	Extra large round silicone	Extra large round silicone	Extra large round silicone	Extra large round silicone	Extra large round silicone	Extra large round silicone
Mouth-piece	Comfo-Bite black silicone	Comfo-Bite black silicone	Comfo-Bite black silicone	Black silicone	Black silicone	Black silicone	Black silicone
Warranty	Limited lifetime	Limited lifetime	Limited lifetime	Limited lifetime	Limited lifetime	Limited lifetime	Limited lifetime
Comments	A great combination for cold water. Low volume and dual controls on second stage allow diver to perfectly adjust airflow to diving conditions.	Full adjustability combined with a high performance first stage provides extremely responsive air delivery.	Great all around, ultra reliable, fully adjustable high performance setup for diving in warmer waters (above 50°F).	High performance setup for divers who don't need an adjustable second stage.	High performance setup for divers who favor ease of use and a balanced diaphragm first stage.	Great performance characteristics in a more economical package.	Easy breathing, dependable regulator.

circle #139 on Reader Service Card

one highly practical performance package: an easy breathing and environmentally adjustable regulator built to withstand the rigors of hard use without degradation of performance. And, it's versatile enough for use in the frigid waters below 50°F as well as the balmy

USER COMMENTS

Inhalation control: "I realized the greatest breath assistance with the inhalation control knob. Also, this large knob was easy to find and adjust in the water."

Surf and surge: "In strong and surgy California surf the XR2 refused to freeflow despite my best efforts."

Comfort: "The low profile design coupled with the Comfo-Bite mouthpiece made this one of the most comfortable regulators I have used."

seas of our tropical dreams. It's a great package that should suit the variable needs of most divers—even if your variable needs all occur on the same dive! The XR2 comes in black with blue accents and retails, with the Century first stage, for \$410 (see accompanying chart for Sea Quest's other first stage/second stage combinations).

For information on this compact dynamo, contact Sea Quest at 2151 Las Palmas Drive, Carlsbad, California 92009 or call (619) 438-1101; fax (619) 438-3142. 

THE BUDDY PHONE

(Continued from Page 31)

The regulator of the professional is designed to maintain a greater positive air pressure inside the mask, regardless of demand. This is more suitable to commercial applications.

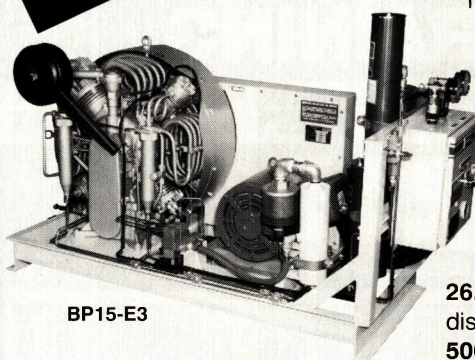
OTHER FULL FACEMASKS: U.S. Divers offers Buddy Phone integration kits to fit full facemasks produced by several other manufacturers. For more information, contact your U.S. Divers dealer.

STX-100 SURFACE UNIT: So topside personnel can coordinate Buddy Phone equipped divers—or just for fun—the STX-100 surface unit is available (not shown here). This small (9 by 7.85 by 3.4 inches) unit is built into a case that is water resistant when the cover is closed. Powered by eight C-cells, it incorporates volume and squelch controls and a channel selector. The two channels are factory set to the Buddy Phone frequency (upper and lower sideband) and four additional channels can be factory installed. A high

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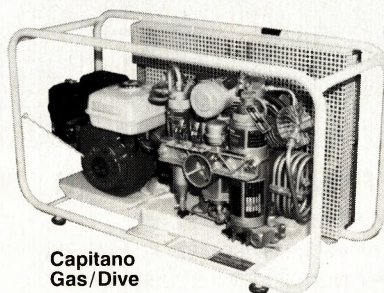
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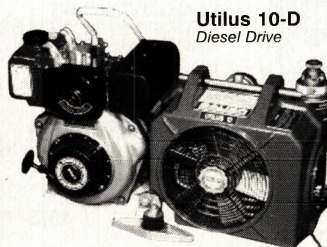


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THE BUDDY PHONE

quality microphone plugs into the case as does the 35 foot cord for the transducer. A speaker is built into the case but optional headphones are available.

When the transducer is submerged, the topside user can listen to all underwater Buddy Phone transmissions and vice versa. The range of the topside unit is twice that of the underwater systems.

When using any Buddy Phone system underwater, always breathe normally on

ascent. If your bubbles drown out a transmission, stop the ascent and ask for a repetition. Always carry an octopus second stage for emergencies. Also, U.S. Divers recommends you receive proper training in the use of the MKII Full Facemask before diving with it.

CONCLUSION

The Buddy Phone makes underwater communication fun, regardless of the type of diving you're doing. With the topside unit you can even bring nondivers in on the action. The Buddy Phone can also add to the safety and efficiency of any



The Buddy Phone comes with a video that demonstrates the system's use.

operation—even if all you want to do is keep track of your dive buddy.

You'll become adept at using any Buddy Phone component quickly and the comfort and durability are built in. But, none of this is possible until you try a Buddy Phone first hand. For more information or the address of the dealer nearest you, contact U.S. Divers at 3323 West Warner Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92704; (714) 540-8010. 🐡

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REMBRANDT VAN RIJN

(Continued from Page 37)

low, bottom bed sheet and blanket for each bunk.

The vessel's social center is its main deck bar, done in white pine wood flooring and trim, complete with fixed bar stools and lounge seating with large windows flanking both sides. Forward of the bar, a few steps down, is the *Rembrandt's* large dining area with enough seating for a full boat. A breakfast menu of eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, cereal and a special recipe cinnamon battered fried toast is served buffetstyle. Lunch and dinner are served sit down style.

THE DIVING

The six day voyage includes one day at Turneffe Islands, three days at Lighthouse Reef, one day at Glover's Reef, and three-quarters of a day in Belize's southern domain. Since **Lighthouse Reef** is the most sought after destination in Belize, the *Rembrandt* focuses its greatest attention on this southern region, from Long Caye to Halfmoon Caye. When it comes to wall diving this area is king, with vertical drops adorned with large colonies of tube, rope and barrel sponges and Deep Water Seafans beginning 35 feet from the surface. Fish life along the crest of sites such as **Silver Caves** and **Aquarium**, can include anything from large schools of Horse-eye Jacks, big groupers and snappers to Eagle Rays.

Lighthouse Reef is also famed for another treasure: a friendly, female Bottlenose Dolphin named Honey. Honey has become notorious for her up-close and personal interaction and playful antics with snorkelers and divers alike. She often shows up when least expected.

Along the stretch facing **Halfmoon**

Caye, the coral precipice takes on its most intriguing appearance. Starting from the inner side of the reef, the bottom begins as sandy slope, dropping to a depth of 50 to 60 feet where it is met by a 30 foot high coral embankment. Cutting seaward through the coral wall are numerous large crevices and tunnels which drop at steep angles toward the abyss. When diving through one of these passages, expect to see anything from large groupers and Green Morays, to sleeping Nurse Sharks and turtles. During the stay off Halfmoon Caye, the crew of the *Rembrandt* will put together a beach picnic for the shore excursion to visit the lighthouse and the booby bird rookery.

Although the *Rembrandt* provides diving services, it may not be suited to those ardent live-aboard divers who like to get in four to six dives a day. Three dives per day is the max. However, the third can be a choice of either a late afternoon or night dive. Owing to the ships' heavy tonnage and deep draft (12 feet), using any of the Turneffe Islands or Lighthouse Reef dive boat moorings is not possible. To resolve this problem, the *Rembrandt* employs two 16 foot inflatables for shuttling divers to and from the sites, which typically takes 10 to 15 minutes each way.

I recommend bringing your own dive equipment. While they do provide tanks (short model 90s with a 10 inch diameter and low profile European DIN valves with U.S. adapters) and weights, onboard rental gear is limited to just a few complete sets of BCs and regulators with gauges.

One of the big thrills of exploring Lighthouse Reef is the **Blue Hole**. This immense, circular underwater cavern, some 300 feet across and 480 feet deep, tantalizes the imagination. While I can guarantee you will not find sea monsters lurking in its dark blue/gray depths, this deep pit in the middle of Lighthouse Reef possesses ancient remnants from the last Ice Age, when the hole was once a dry cave—several monstrous stalactites hanging from a narrow sill at a depth of 110 feet. True giants, several of these formations are 15 to 18 feet in length and can be found to depths of 147 feet.

For the Blue Hole dive, the *Rembrandt* takes station off West Point, the closest possible access point for a skiff to reach the Blue Hole (about 25 minutes). Following the dive into the hole, taking time to explore the shallows along the rim during the safety stop can present a cornucopia of Christmas Tree, Fan and Colonial Tube Worms in just about any hue, as well as numerous varieties of small gobies and blennies scurrying across the sand and rubble.

As with any vessel of this type, don't expect a fast ship. The *Rembrandt's* av-

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REMBRANDT VAN RIJN

erage cruising speed is roughly nine knots, with a top speed of 11 when sail and power are combined. With both deployed, the crossing from Lighthouse Reef to Glover's Reef will take roughly five and a half hours. Following a day on Glover's Reef, the last leg of the voyage (day six) includes a couple of dives inside the barrier reef around Laughing Bird Caye.

The *Rembrandt* does not bill itself as a serious dive live-aboard. It is, however, a

unique cruise for those seeking to combine a little bit of diving with the mystique of sailing the waters of Belize from the deck of a Tall Ship.

Rates are based on double occupancy for seven night dive trips. Forward cabins are \$999 per person; \$1,199 for double bed models. The larger, deluxe cabin is \$1,499 per person. Prices include all meals, snacks and round trip ground transfers. Like most operations, soft drinks, beer, wine or the harder stuff is charged separately. For booking information, the Holland based Oceanwide Expeditions U.S. office can be reached at

333 N. Sam Houston Parkway, Suite 1165, Houston, Texas 77060. Phone (713) 591-1616, (800) 453-7245 or fax (713) 591-1082.

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Dive Notes

NEW AUTOMATIC U/W CAMERA: The SeaLife ReefMaster, from Pioneer Research, can take photographs down to 164 feet. The camera features a f/3.5 wide



angle lens, big sports viewfinder, large shutter lever (for easy use with gloves) and auto-

matic winding. It's also equipped with a special "coral flash" that compensates for the blue effect on closer objects but leaves the aqua blue color of the water untouched.

For more information, contact Pioneer research at 216 Haddon Avenue, Westmont, NJ 08108 or phone (609) 854-2424, (800) 257-7742 or fax (609) 858-8695. 🐟

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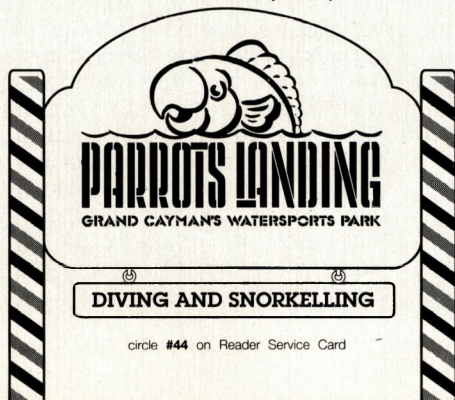
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Vatulele Island Resort

A Picture Perfect Dive Vacation in Fiji

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



Top: Whitetip Reef Shark (*Triaenodon obesus*).
Above and below: Romantic walks along Vatulele's white beaches begin a kiss, or two, from the resort's steps.



Fiji is one of the top dive destinations in the world and Vatulele abounds in unspoiled underwater scenery. Susan Savelle (above) admires a flaming orange gorgonian.

Sit back and picture your perfect vacation. There would be warm, azure waters teeming with animal life and providing great diving; endless white beaches; romantic sunsets guaranteed to take your breath away; five star cuisine and drink; and friendly folks taking care of your every need. Sound too good to be true? Well, maybe not. Welcome to Vatulele Island Resort, Fiji. Prepare to be pampered and spoiled at this breathtakingly beautiful property.

This retreat is just a half hour flight from the main island of Viti Levu. Vatulele Island Resort is only six years old, the creation of Emmy award winning Australian TV producer, Henry Crawford, and Martin Livingston. Martin, a fifth generation European Fijian who is part owner of the resort, is also the manager.

Vatulele has no western development apart from the resort. Nearly all the staff comes from one of the four local villages with a total population of less than 1,000. Staff members quickly learn your name and you'll feel at home here from the first sip of your welcome drink. Fiji truly has the friendliest people on earth!

Vatulele Resort's 16 villas, designed for couples, are nestled in the natural tropical

foliage offering total privacy. They feature high thatched roofs, thick, white washed walls, tables made of stone, a shaded terrace with hammocks for two, king sized beds and even a do not disturb sign made from a cowrie shell necklace. All villas were handmade from materials from the main island to preserve the natural state of Vatulele. Heavy cranes were not available, thus the high beamed ceilings were constructed with manpower alone. This incredible feat had stunning results.

Food is a special feature of the resort. The meals are five star delights with a variety of cuisine, including Californian, Thai, Italian, Japanese, Indian, etc. Weather permitting, meals are taken on a terrace overlooking the lagoon. By night, tables are set under the stars and lit by lanterns and candlelight.

You'll find that folks at Vatulele cater to romance. If you wish to dine in private, you can reserve time in the wine cellar or request a table for two at the water's edge. Just offshore is the secluded Nooki Nooki Island. Couples can be dropped off on the island for a champagne breakfast or lunch and have the unpopulated island all to themselves.

Vatulele is only seven miles long and three miles wide. The northern and eastern coasts are protected by a barrier reef that creates a lagoon in front of the resort. This makes a perfect spot for swimming, snorkeling or watersports. The endless stretches of white sand provide the perfect escape from the pressures of the daily grind—no phones, faxes or deadlines. If you get thirsty relaxing on the beach, just stand the beach flag in the sand and you will find the true meaning of service.

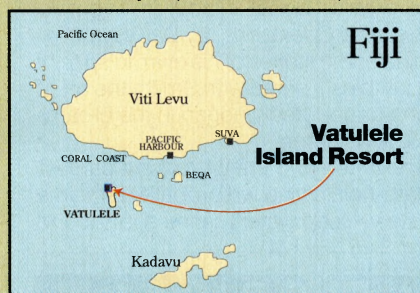
Fiji is one of the top dive destinations in the world and the clear, warm waters off Vatulele offer ideal diving. Although the diving operation has only been in business for three years, the staff members have worked hard to make it top-notch. Various dive sites surround the island, offering plenty of opportunities for all levels of diving experience. The shallows are densely populated with rich, healthy hard corals and home to fish of every color of the rainbow. You might encounter almost anything on the deep walls; schools of Barracuda, tur-

tles and the ever-present cruising reef sharks. Soft corals and seafans can be found in the areas with good currents. This underwater getaway is just waiting to be explored and captured on film.

Dive operations are managed by Malcolm Scott and his crew. The dive shop has tanks, a compressor and is fully equipped with the necessary dive gear for those who want to travel light. There are two boat dives a day and dive packages, resort courses and PADI certification classes are available.

We bet you thought we were kidding about the luxury this remote island can offer. Vatulele Island Resort is the first and only South Pacific resort to be accepted into the Relais & Chateaux hotel chain. This prestigious hotel group emphasizes the five "Cs": character, courtesy, calm, charm and cuisine.

Vatulele Island Resort is for the discerning diver who appreciates the finer things in life. To truly experience its uniqueness



the minimum stay is four nights, making it a perfect romantic interlude. Isn't it about time you took that perfect vacation—the one you've been dreaming of? Come experience Vatulele, your own piece of par-

GETTING THERE

Flights to Fiji are available through Air Pacific and Qantas. The nonstop Air



Pacific flight from Los Angeles to Fiji's International Airport in Nadi is approximately 10 hours. The outer islands can be reached via the local carriers, Air Fiji and Sunflower.

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(800) 227-4446

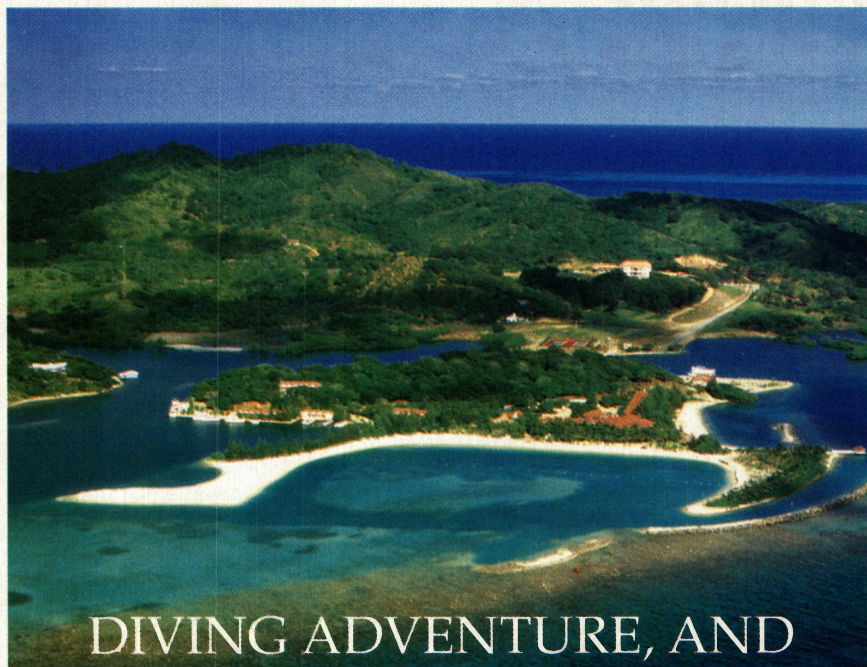
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adise. Once you've been spoiled by the friendly Fijians of Vatulele, dive vacations will never be the same.

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SKIN DIVER SEPTEMBER 1996 65

The History of Diving and the Subsistence of Mollusks

BY E.R. CROSS



Sixty years ago there were only a few recreational divers in the world. In the 1950s, there were hundreds, then thousands of divers of all sorts. Now, going into the 21st century, there are reportedly 2.5 million of us. At first there was a fairly accurate history of our activities. Then accurate history became warped by the egos that wanted to be first, best, biggest, last, deepest, stay the longest or whatever. In the next few months, Technifacts will research factual material to develop an accurate record of diving.

This month reviews the beginnings of breath-hold diving. Where and how did it start? To answer that question intelligently

it is necessary to look back on the art of diving and its definition. S.W. Smith, in his 1823 book *Observations on Diving and Diving Machines*, surmised, "Diving, it is well known, is the art of descending under water, to a considerable depth, and abiding there a competent time. The uses of diving are considerable, particularly: pearls, corals, sponges, wrecks of ships."

Both depth and time at depth are contingent on conditions and depend primarily on equipment, knowledge and physical ability—the three sides of the triangle of safety. To survive, breath-hold divers must be able to surface frequently to get a fresh supply of air. This fundamental has not changed except to improve depth and time at depth through betterment of diving techniques.

Smith also stated, "The first divers un-

questionably learned the art by early and adventurous practice, in trying how long they could continue under water without breathing." There were no masks, fins, snorkels and or wetsuits then. Unassisted breath-hold divers probably never reached great depths or stayed for the times sometimes reported in early diving literature. Perhaps the tallest tales ever told about breath-hold diving are in Smith's book and some found their way into a later book, *Deep Diving and Submarine Operations*, by Davis, who invented some stories of his own. In spite of the tall tales, I agree with Smith, the art of diving undoubtedly began in the breath-hold diving mode.

The when and the why of the earliest breath-hold diving will probably remain a mystery. Deep water marine shells found

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BEGIN	100	90	80	70	60	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0
DEPTH Feet	100	90	80	70	60	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	0
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in kitchen middens (refuse heaps) of ancient civilizations indicate the ability of these people to dive. Some of these middens date back more than 10,000 years. Deep water shells were also part of religious and burial ceremonies.

The next Technifacts will describe the first known device for extending the diver's time underwater. Be with us for a surprise.

THE HIGH ANDES/ SHELL DIVERS

The April Technifacts reviewed the archaeological work of Dr. Johan Reinhard and others in the high Andes of Peru and Chile. We reviewed the use of *Spondylus* shells, harvested by divers at Isla La Plata, Ecuador, in human sacrifices in northern Chile. Parts of these shells, carved in animal and human form, were transported to burial sites in the high Andes. There they became offerings in living human sacrifices. Dr. Reinhard wrote, "More carved *Spondylus* effigies were discovered by us this fall.... We did inaugurate a small museum with our finds at the village of Challapampa on the Island of the Sun (in Lake Titicaca). Divers might find it of interest."

MOLLUSKS

Recently a SKIN DIVER reader asked how so many kinds of life can be supported in very small areas. Primarily this reader's interest was in the many mollusks found under a large flat stone.

I am surprised more divers are not aware of the many kinds of flora and fauna that exist under various objects in nearly all bodies of water. Particularly, the fascinating families of mollusks, the second most abundant and diverse of all life forms. The shells will probably be gastropods; some will be herbivores; others carnivores. There will also be some bivalves that are filter feeders. Probably a few animals will be micro- or macroscopic in size.

There are thousands of kinds of animals and plants in the micro to macro size categories. At first it is startling to see so many kinds of organisms in such proximity. What can so many life forms possibly find to eat? Partly they eat each other. But, that is not the complete answer. Almost never will two animals of a restricted population feed on the same organism. To cope with this problem the many kinds of mollusks have developed many kinds of feeding apparatus.

The range of food eaten by gastropods is unequalled in any comparable group of animals—at least partly owing to the diversity of feeding mechanisms employed in their feeding. This class of shells includes microfeeders using brushing, scraping and boring radula plus many filtering feeding systems. The slightly larger

(Continued on Page 124)

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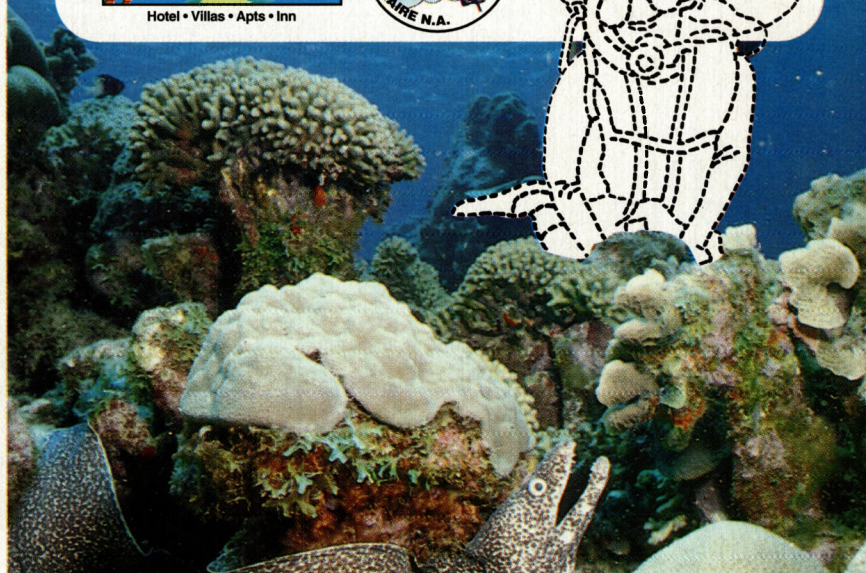
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Nekton Pilot

Cay Sal/Bahamas Adventure

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL HARRIGAN

Webster defines nekton as a free swimming animal essentially independent of wave and current action. The *Nekton Pilot*, which takes the second half of its name from the Pilot Whale, uses a relatively new hull design to slip the grasp of the waves. The result is a luxury live-aboard that is remarkably, well, nektonic. First impressions of the vessel are deceptive: the somewhat boxy hull catches the eye while the advanced design of the twin hulls is hidden below the wa-

ter. The unusual steering and ballasting systems are only apparent from the pilothouse. No doubt each of us had different impressions of *Nekton Pilot* as we boarded in Ft. Lauderdale but we were all looking forward to our Cay Sal adventure aboard this unique vessel.

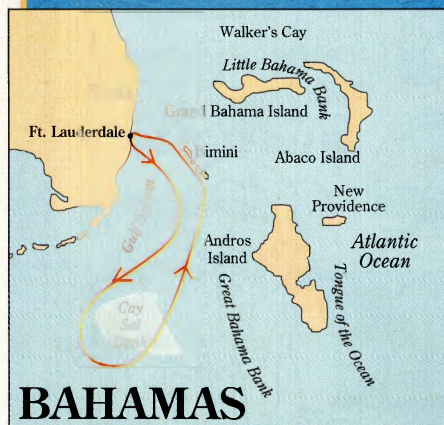
SUNDAY

Crew members helped us get settled aboard and the cabins were our first delightful discovery. Large windows provide panoramic views and the word cabin hardly does justice to these spacious rooms. The queen sized bed is cleverly designed to be separated into twin beds when needed. Each room includes a bathroom with a full sized toilet and shower. *Nekton Pilot's* high capacity watermakers turn out generous amounts of fresh water, so comfortable showers are encouraged, provided the length is not excessive. There is a large closet with plenty of shelf space for clothes and personal articles. One of the best features of the cabins is the

individual thermostat for the air-conditioning so the temperature of each cabin can be precisely controlled.

Nekton Pilot carries a maximum of 30 guests, who are accommodated easily without crowding. Look around during the day and you'll probably wonder where everyone is. This is owing partly to the incredible amount of physical space aboard—more than 6,000 square feet. It is divided among three decks, each of which has a number of large spaces for living, eating or just playing, making it easy to be off by yourself or with your own group. Another factor is the diving schedule, which is set up so you can go in whenever you like after the vessel is on the dive site, as long as you're back aboard for lunch and dinner. This effectively prevents crowding on the dive deck and in the water.

Nekton Pilot's SWATH design, which stands for Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull, puts the hulls of the boat below the surface and the living



A snorkeler leaves the luxury of the *Nekton Pilot* to float in the sensuous warmth of the clear blue seas surrounding the Water Cays.



The 78 by 40 foot *Nekton Pilot* gives guests ample deck space to roam. There are many other amenities, such as a skiff, kayaks and an adjustable dive deck.

quarters on struts above it. Waves flow by without rocking the boat. SWATH design doesn't completely eliminate the pitching and rolling motion of a boat but it slows the rate of rolling and dramatically dampens the amplitude. A catamaran of similar size, for instance, rolls from side to side in about four seconds, while *Nekton Pilot* takes about 26 seconds. The ride is so stable that tall glass vases of fresh flowers can be left—unsecured—on tables. More importantly, your inner ear isn't playing catch-up to the motion of the boat. Sea sickness is a rarity on *Nekton Pilot* and we were able to sleep well on the night passage to The Bahamas.

The SWATH design of *Nekton Pilot* has other advantages in addition to the smooth ride. Because the engines are underwater in the pontoons, the vessel is extremely quiet and free of vibration. It is not an exaggeration to say you get the feeling of being on a cruise ship rather than a 78 foot boat.

All of *Nekton Pilot's* technological advances would be wasted without a good crew. We discovered during the week that 11 talented individuals make up this crew. Although crew assignments vary from week to week, there is always a captain, first mate, engineer, chef, activities director and six instructors.

MONDAY

Nekton Pilot docked at Cat Cay for Bahamian customs formalities while we breakfasted high up in the salon on crisp bacon, freshly made French toast, fresh fruit salad, bagels, muffins and cereal. Beverages included coffee, tea and a selection of juices. After breakfast we set up our gear on the unique adjustable dive deck. Regardless of how *Nekton Pilot*

happens to be ballasted, the bottom tier of the dive platform can be set exactly at water level. Getting into the water is easier than stepping into a pool. Two stainless steel ladders extend about five feet below the surface for easy water exits. The dive deck itself is well organized, with individual storage for masks and fins. Steel 95 and 72 cubic foot tanks are available, pumped to 2,400 PSI. Aluminum 80s are also available upon request. The same tank is used for every dive, so you only set your gear up once. A warm freshwater shower on deck and dry towels are also available after every dive.

Bahamian water temperatures range from 84°F in the summer to 77°F in the winter, so a light wetsuit or shorty is all that is needed. In the summer, a Lycra skinskin is a good idea, if just for sun protection. Wetsuits are hung to dry between dives on the sundeck, which is big enough for a soccer match, except the spa would get in the way. Lounge chairs are provided for sun worshippers and several tables are set under the sunshade.

Nekton Pilot is well-outfitted for photographers. Two camera rinse barrels are permanently mounted on either side of the dive ladders and a third rinse barrel is next to the camera tables on the second deck. The two carpeted tables without railings seemed a bit risky at first but *Nekton Pilot's* lack of motion makes such precautions superfluous. E-6 film is processed on board and there are two light tables and two projectors in the lounge for viewing slides. Rental Nikonos V cameras and custom pho-



Top: A lively assortment of colorful fish, including Blackbar Soldierfish, Blue-striped and French Grunts, Creole Wrasse, Porkfish and Yellowtail Goatfish swarm the Strip. Above: The hottub on the sundeck is a center of social activity.

tography and videos are available.

Our first dive was at **Tuna Alley**, just west of Cat Cay, where a mini-wall runs from 70 to about 95 feet. A series of ravines cut perpendicular to the wall form long swim-throughs lined with rust colored Black Corals.

In the afternoon we made a drift dive along **Victory Reef**. Although we stayed in a group for safety, the excellent visibility let us spread out along the reef face. We hung weightless as the reef drifted by, passing through schools of purple Creole Wrasse and silver Atlantic Spadefish. Huge mounds of Smooth Brain Coral and Giant Star Coral dominated the growth on the reef.

TUESDAY

Nekton Pilot was as still as an apartment building as Tuesday dawned clear
(Continued on next Page)

NEKTON PILOT

and calm. By 8:00 am a light, pleasant breeze ruffled the blue water and we were ready to dive **Last Chance Reef**. The reef has a profile between 40 and 60 feet, with one very large coral mound and dozens of smaller reef sections scattered over the nearly level sandy bottom. With only a slight hint of current, we were free to explore in any direction. My partner and I spent most of the dive at an isolated reef about the size of a bus that was sur-

rounded by tropical fish. A bright yellow Coney with a parasitic copepod perched on its head followed us closely. As we moved slowly around the reef, hundreds of Chromis, Damselfish, Hamlets and Harlequin Bass came out to greet us.

After lunch we moved south to a shallow reef called the **Playground**. With a depth range of about 15 to 20 feet, we were free to play here all afternoon. The bottom is a series of circular sand pockets, low reefs and patches of sea grass. Although hard corals are sparse, the soft corals and fish life are wonderful. We were shadowed everywhere by a large,

curious Barracuda and enjoyed several close-up encounters with pairs of White Spotted Filefish. The deeply undercut ledges at Playground are fun to explore at night, too. Hog Snappers, Spanish Hogfish and Surgeonfish all seek protection. Light sensitive Orangeball Corallimorphs decorate the ledges, along with hundreds of other interesting invertebrates.

WEDNESDAY

The morning sun blazed a yellow trail across the long, flat swells, which were barely perceptible as they slid beneath the raised hull of *Nekton Pilot*. We crossed from nearly 2,000 feet of water to about 20 feet on the northeast edge of Cay Sal Bank. In the center of a triangle formed by the Florida Keys, Cuba and the Great Bahama Bank, Cay Sal Bank is remarkably remote. No other vessels were in sight, nor would we see one until we left the bank and journeyed north again. It is about 65 miles long and 40 miles wide. The water depth across the top might average 15 feet, although the deep blue holes on the eastern side are far deeper. Our first dive on Cay Sal Bank was at a blue hole called **Silversides**. Formed when the entire bank was out of the water, the lip of the hole is now about 20 feet deep and the bottom is somewhere below 200 feet. As we glided into the mysterious shadows beyond the rim, a trio of Blacktip Reef Sharks cruised over to inspect us.

Big Blue is another blue hole, several hundred yards in diameter. It is surrounded by a very nice reef at about 35 feet, with soft corals and the occasional sphere of Brain or Star Coral spilling over the edge. A dozen or so sharks routinely patrol the circumference of Big Blue, usually Caribbean Reef Sharks and Blacktips with an occasional Bull Shark. Eight or ten sharks gave us a chance to observe them close-up in their natural environment. Two Nurse Sharks swam by below us, looking large even from 50 or 60 feet above. An enormous Loggerhead Turtle with two big remoras also gave us a close look as it swam slowly over the reef and into the misty blue of the hole.

Sistine Chapel is a much smaller blue hole, at least at the top. Below about 80 feet the sides are cut far back and lined with sponges and wire coral, creating the impression of a painted ceiling. A night dive in and around Sistine Chapel rounded out our tour of the Cay Sal blue holes. The eeriness of the hole at night was a treat and almost everyone saw Nurse Sharks, Loggerhead Turtles and numerous octopus.

THURSDAY

Nekton Pilot crossed Cay Sal Bank in the night and in the morning we were anchored in crystal blue water near the



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western edge. After breakfast we slipped among the Cay Sal Cays, past the abandoned lighthouse and out to **Elbow Reef**. The wall here is deep, between 60 and 80 feet along the top. The bottom is somewhere around 3,000 feet and the way the wall disappears vertically into the depths is dazzling. The visibility is consistently good, at least 150 feet. Nassau Groupers, Black Jacks and Deep Water Seafans are numerous on the wall. Many Azure Vase Sponges and Queen Angel-fish gave splashes of color to the wall, even at 110 feet. The flow of clear blue water that gives Elbow Reef its excellent visibility also means a strong current is nearly always present.

We spent the afternoon playing at the **Water Cays**, a line of uninhabited islands on the northwest corner of Cay Say Bank. The kayaks were put in the water, the skiff was available for transportation to the hideaway beach and the dive deck was open for diving and snorkeling. Visibility was about 100 feet and the depth ranged from a couple of feet to about 30 feet. The bottom is mostly sand and limestone but still teems with life. Spiny lobster, Nurse Sharks and dozens of different species of juvenile reef fish were found in every direction from the boat.

FRIDAY

Even though we were underway all night, *Nekton Pilot's* soft, fluid motion let us sleep soundly as usual. At 8:30 am we were in the water at **Thumbnail**, off the northeast corner of Bimini. On the bottom, a thumb-nail-shaped plateau at 70 feet drops off in a mini wall to 130 feet, then continues sloping to about 150 feet. A large school of Atlantic Spadefish swam up and down the mooring line. Bar Jacks raided a school of Silversides and Queen Angelfish munched on the colorful sponges that grew under every ledge. A swirling school of Horse-eye Jacks was on the site for our second dive, as well as a number of Spotted Morays and a Loggerhead Turtle. In the afternoon we moved over to a narrow reef called **Strip**, where the dive deck was open until after the night dive. The coral here is surrounded by clouds of juvenile and adult grunts, mixed with small packs of Blackbar Soldierfish and Porkfish.

While rinsing our dive gear for the final time, several divers commented on the wonderful range of diving experiences on this trip. We had enjoyed deep and shallow walls, blue holes, drift dives, night dives and coral gardens. All of it was excellent and *Nekton Pilot* exceeded all expectations. An additional day is planned for future *Nekton Pilot* trips to Cay Sal, which will add even more great diving on Cay Sal Bank.

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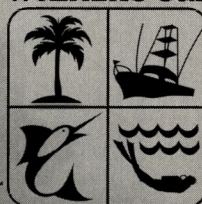
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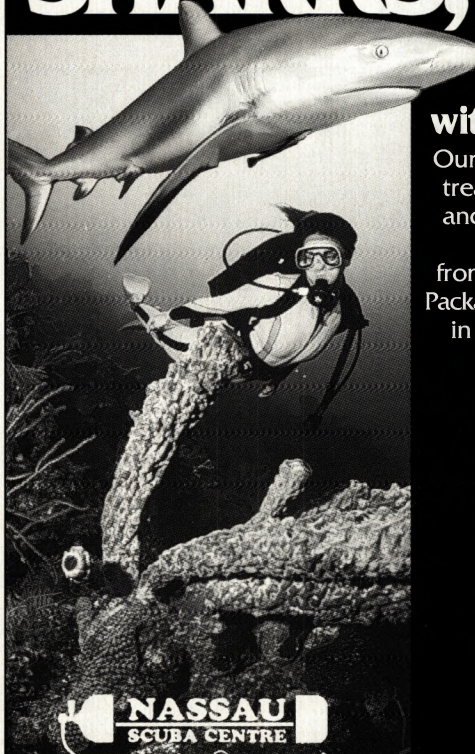
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SINAI DIVERS

(Continued from Page 52)

boats. While the divemasters are from around the world, captains and crew are locals, many from the nomadic Bedouin groups that still wander the Sinai.

Our first dive was at **Jackson Reef**, a magnificent wall dive, famous around the world. As with many spots here, the wall begins within inches of the surface. A sheer drop-off is smothered with vibrant soft corals in purple, red and pink, punctuated with huge seafans. Everywhere the wall pulses with millions of bright orange *Anthias*, while groupers, triggerfish and wrasse add to the excitement. On the way back to the boat I spotted a large Stonefish resting on a ledge close to the anchor-line and was able to approach close enough for a number of full face portraits.

Between dives we were treated to a wonderful fish lunch, cooked on board. During this delightful surface interval, some bathed in the ever-present sunshine while others lazed around and chatted. I took the time to catch up with Hassan, the divemaster I first met years before when he worked as a deckhand on one of the Sinai

Divers live-aboards. Encouraged by Rolf and Petra, he worked his way through the ranks to become a fine divemaster and a devoted environmentalist. His briefings reflect his love of the water and his desire to nurture and protect it.

Our second dive was a slow drift at **Woodhouse**, another of the four large reefs in the Straits of Tiran. For most of the group, the highpoints were encounters with a small group of sharks and a meeting with a turtle. As I have seen so

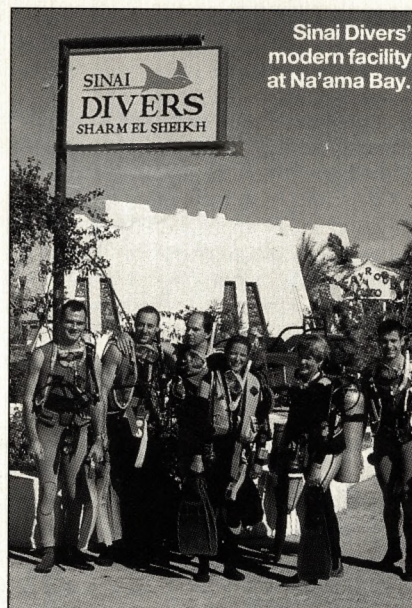
many times in the Red Sea, the turtle stayed around for what seemed like forever and only left when we began to climb aboard the waiting boat.

SHARM EL SHEIKH

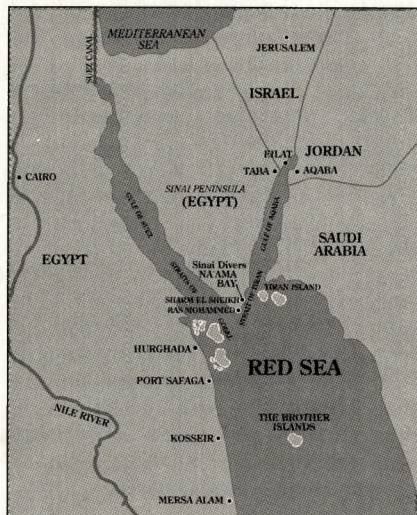
We arrived back at the dock by four in the afternoon, perfect timing for us to shower and relax before the evening's activities. Until a few years ago there was little to do in Sharm el Sheikh other than dive but that is definitely not the case today. The area has a feeling of relaxed fun that seems especially alive when the sun dips and the cool of the evening arrives. A number of superb hotels—Movenpick, Marriott, Sonesta, Hilton, AquaMarine, Ghazala and Sharm Marina—stretch from one end of the sweeping sandy bay to the other with myriad stores, restaurants and gift shops scattered in between.

THE LIVE-ABOARDS

The second part of my trip allowed me to dive from the newest Sinai Divers vessel, a magnificent, state of the art live-aboard, the *Ghazala Voyager*. Eighty-five feet in length, the *Voyager* was custom built and, upon stepping aboard, the high quality woodwork and attention to detail are immediately evident. While a live-aboard means you miss the nightlife of Sharm el Sheikh, it gives you much more



photo/courtesy Sinai Divers



diving per day and allows access to sites that are too far away for the day boats. So it was with this trip. Taking advantage of flat calm waters, our captain, Nick, headed into the Gulf of Suez, taking us to one of the greatest wreck dives in the Red Sea—the *Thistlegorm*. She sank in 1941 while carrying supplies to the British 8th army, battling Rommels' forces in the

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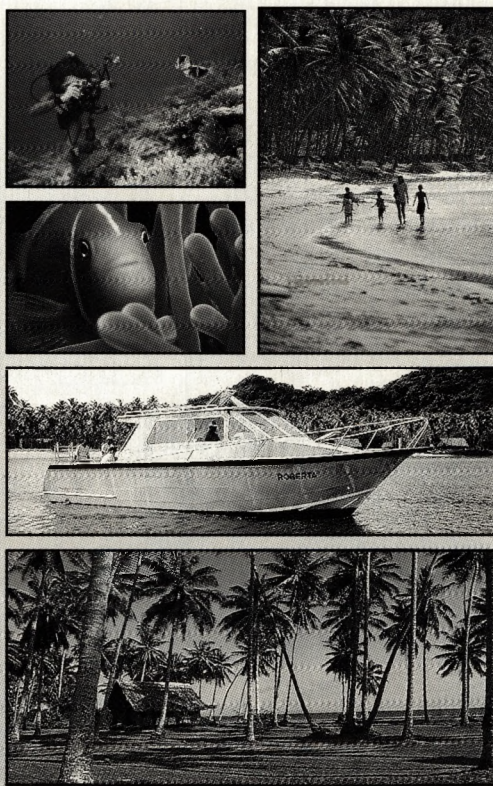
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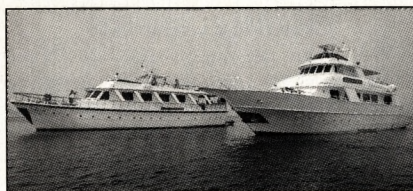


SINAI DIVERS

North African desert. She sank in 130 feet of water, landing on her keel, split asunder by the bombs that caused her demise.

For much of the year this site, in the very middle of the gulf, can be rough and suffer a ripping current but the day we arrived, conditions could hardly have been better. We descended the anchor line at the bow and I quickly dropped into one of the large cargo holds to explore. The interior was reminiscent of Truk Lagoon,

for the remains of trucks and Triumph motorcycles lay eerily askew as if awaiting their chance to head into battle. Artillery shells, packed four to a tin box,



Sinai Divers' sumptuous, new 85 foot live-aboard *Ghazala Voyager* (right) and a recently refitted old favorite, *Ghazala 1* (left).

lay scattered around the deck, while the guns they serviced were hardly identifiable beneath cloaks of soft coral. Amidships, the gash caused by the fatal bombs signaled a short swim to port; in the sand, right where I had been promised by divemaster Christina, a locomotive stood, blown out of the hold by the explosion. Nearby, a Crocodilefish rested on debris from the train. By the time we reached the stern of the vessel we had explored more than 400 feet of fascinating wreckage and ascended a second line to our waiting dinghy.

On another day we experienced what many have described as the finest single dive site in the world—**Ras Mohammed**. Though I have dived here hundreds of times during the past 20 years, I never cease to be amazed by the beauty, variety and sheer excitement of this very special dive site. Plunging walls, sunny coral gardens, the remnants of a shipwreck, huge anemones filled with clownfish—Ras Mohammed has it all. Slipping lazily along a sheer drop-off, propelled by a slight current, we passed striking Map Angelfish, Batfish and the ever present *Anthias*. Swept around the corner into a shallow coral garden, we spent time with the massive Napoleon Wrasse that lives here, greeting all visitors to his domain.



Owners Rolf Schmidt and Petra Roeglin.

Life on a live-aboard is always simple—you eat, you dive and you sleep—but the *Voyager* is a floating palace and surface intervals are a restful pleasure. The eight cabins offer ensuite bath, individual air-conditioning and a choice of piped in music. The main salon is equipped with stereo and video. A large upper deck caters to sun-seekers; a shaded, cushioned sitting area is available for those who may have overindulged. But, perhaps the most amazing feature of the entire boat is the dive deck. Never have I seen a dive deck so large, so spacious or so comfortable—it's simply massive. Many dives are made from the back platform, though a speedy inflatable is always ready to whisk divers off to more distant sites or pick them up if they surface away from the boat. The *Ghazala Voyager*



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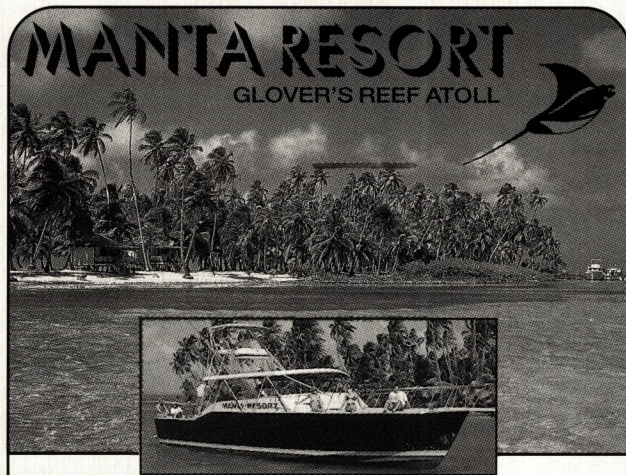
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SINAI DIVERS

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Though the *Voyager* is the stylish new kid on the block around the northern Red Sea, Sinai Divers has a second live-aboard that also frequents these gorgeous waters—a grand old lady of Red Sea diving, the *Ghazala 1*. Where the *Voyager* offers sleek design and state of the art features, the *Ghazala 1* is a familiar, comfy, understated home away from home for 12. She may be a little plain in

comparison to her new sister but what she lacks in looks she makes up for in charm, ease and good cheer. To ensure she keeps up with her young sibling, Rolf recently spent more than \$250,000 on an extensive refit that has the venerable vessel looking better than ever.

Sinai Divers has also put two other new live-aboards into service in the last year, the *Ghazala Explorer* and the *Ghazala Adventurer*, both equipped for 14 divers. However, these ships, which resemble the *Voyager* (though 12 feet longer), will seldom be seen in Sharm el Sheikh, for they will ply the newest area of Egypt's

Red Sea, the far south. The south is an almost mystical place that divers have explored only in the last few years, returning with amazing stories of rich reefs, incredi-

STOPOVER IN EGYPT

No visit to Egypt would be complete without a visit to the wonders of the Ancient World and the glory of the Pharaohs. As most Red Sea divers pass through Cairo anyway, a short stopover is easy and economical to arrange. A typical itinerary would include three or four days in Cairo, allowing time to visit the Egyptian Museum, with its fabulous treasures, including the unbelievably beautiful King Tut mask. The Alabaster Mosque of Mohammed Ali, which stands vigil over the city and, of course, the Sphinx and Pyramids of Giza, the last remaining Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, are also must sees. Tour operators in the States, such as Tropical Adventures Travel, can arrange conducted tours for individuals, couples or groups, using top quality hotels such as the Cairo Sheraton, the Semiramis Intercontinental and the Nile Hilton. Led by informative experts in Egyptology, these tours represent the best way to see and understand some of Egypt's incredible history.

Those with a little more time can extend their visits and travel to Luxor, the Thebes of ancient times, to explore the vast Temple of Karnak and the Valley of the Kings or enjoy a leisurely four day cruise on the Nile, stopping to visit temples along the way. To really do it right, don't forget to add Abu Simbel, site of the reconstructed Temple of Ramses the Great, which now sits on the banks of Lake Nasser, formed when the Aswan High Dam was built. When it was realized the temple would be lost in the flooding the dam would create, help came in from around the world, allowing the Egyptians to move the temple, stone by stone, to higher ground where it was reconstructed.

ble walls and astonishing fish life. Sharks, dolphins and mantas are found in abundance and the diver never knows what will be waiting around the next coral head. This is an area where there is little settlement and the boats are truly on their own. It is important the boats used down here be reliable, comfortable and long range. The *Explorer* and *Adventurer*, custom built to Sinai Divers' exacting standards, meet all criteria and offer a safe and luxurious experience in a magical dive zone few have yet been lucky enough to see.

When Rolf and Petra began their Red Sea adventure more than 20 years ago, little did they know how far it would go.

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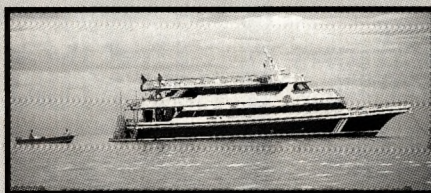
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A number of airlines offer service to Cairo, including KLM, Lufthansa and British Airways. The least expensive flights are usually aboard Egypt's national flag carrier, EgyptAir, the only airline offering direct flights from the U.S. to Egypt.

A visa is required for travel to Egypt though, if you forget, your tour agent will be able to get one for you at the airport when you arrive. The visa allows for a stay of up to 30 days. Your passport should be valid for at least six months from your date of entry into Egypt and must have two blank pages for visa stamps.

Electricity in Egypt is 220 volts; American electrical products that run on 110 volts will need not only a transformer but also plug adapters to allow for battery charging.

offer new boats and new experiences such as their southern live-aboard program. Yet their efforts are driven by the same love of diving and place that brought them to the Red Sea in the first place. They have no plans to leave any time soon and see great new opportunities ahead. That's just part of the reason I'll be back to dive the Red Sea with Sinai Divers over and over again in the years to come.

To book your Red Sea adventure, contact Tropical Adventures Travel at (800) 247-3483, (206) 441-3483 or fax (206) 441-5431. 🐠

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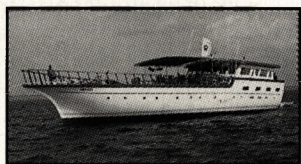


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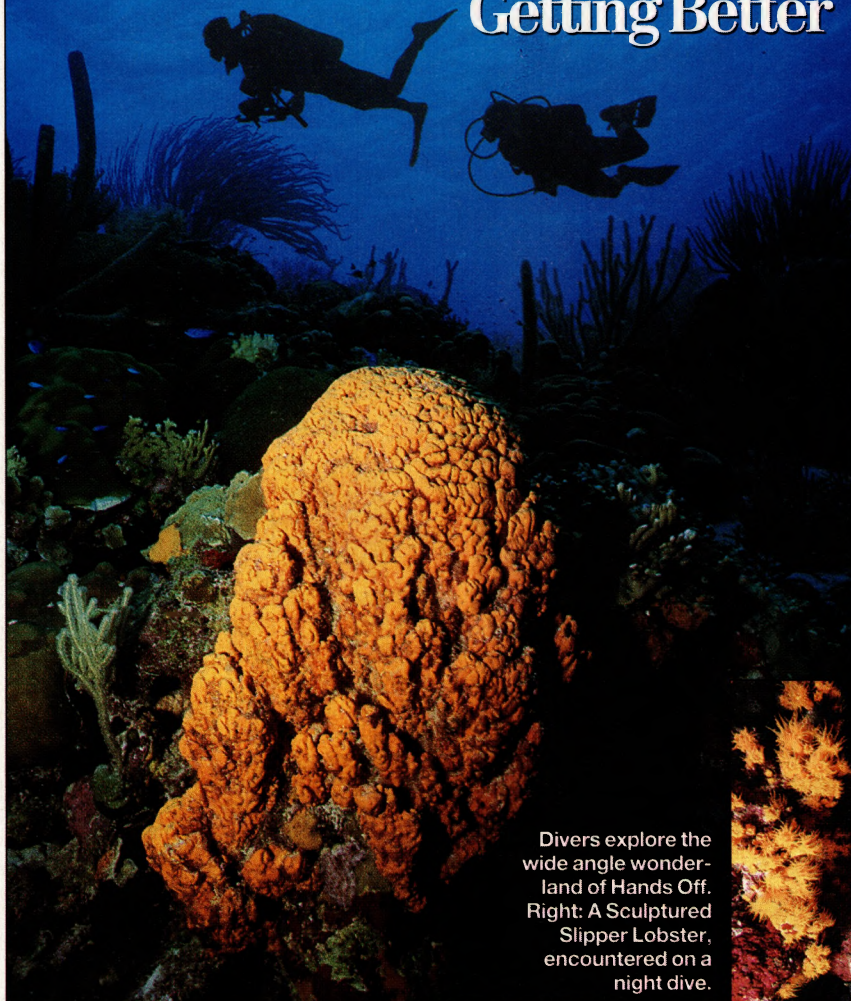
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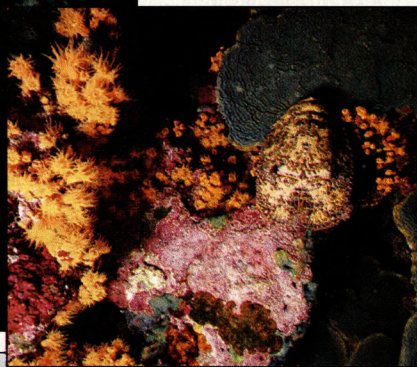
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Divers explore the wide angle wonderland of Hands Off. Right: A Sculptured Slipper Lobster, encountered on a night dive.



The Carib Inn staff from left to right: Bruce Bowker, Tessa Ley, JJ Joslin, Edward Thomas, Kitty Handschuh, Ed Diehl and Linda Baker. Not shown is Richie Anthony.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY BONNIE J. CARDONE

There is great joy in returning to a place you love and haven't seen for awhile. Favorite haunts seem fresh and exciting, yet you know what to expect and look forward to enjoying it.

That's the way I feel each time I visit Bonaire and Bruce Bowker's Carib Inn. My group just returned from our sixth visit to this small island/tiny resort. And, although everything's essentially the same, it's also different. Bruce isn't one to let grass grow (if you could grow grass on this arid island) under his feet, he's always busy improving his little property. Last year he added a seawall and a barbecue area near the cabaña (which had been enlarged) on the shoreline, next to the dive pier.

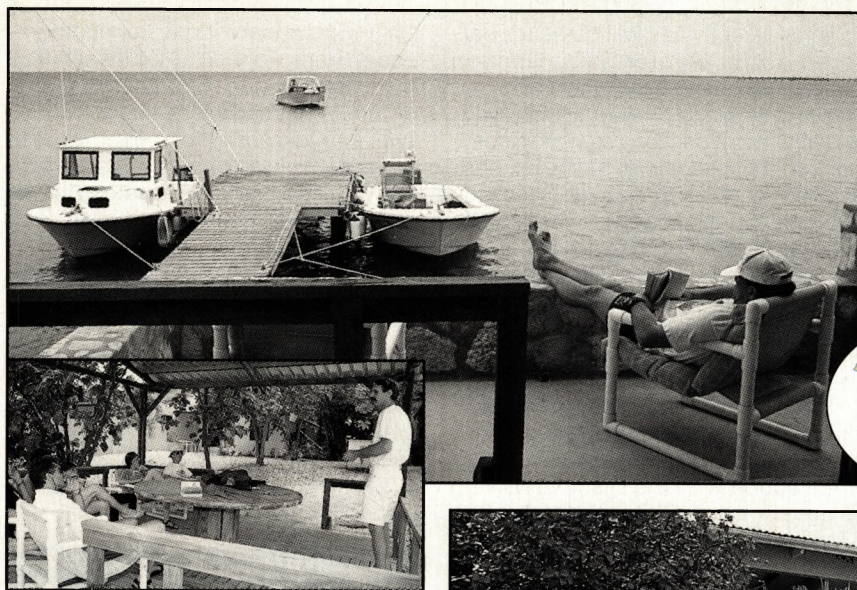
Last year Bruce also added a second story to his dive store, making it into a well appointed, comfortable classroom with an audio/visual center. Bruce and his staff conduct PADI courses here, ranging from resort to divemaster, including numerous specialties. The free buoyancy control workshops are still conducted in the cabaña by the dive pier. The Carib Inn also handles referrals. This means guests can complete the classroom work for a scuba course at home, then make their dives in Bonaire's clear, warm waters.

In his small dive store, Bruce offers an amazingly diverse and abundant line of dive gear, accessories and sundries, including the very best T-shirts found anywhere on the island. If you're shopping for a dive computer, check

out his prices—they're probably less than you would pay stateside!

Last year Bruce installed two new compressors and increased his air storage by 50 percent. Guests will be happy to hear this—the new system means he can fill tanks even faster. This year there is a large new aluminum freshwater rinse tank for gear. It's conveniently located steps from the boats and the guest equipment storage lockers.

The size of the Carib Inn—small—is but one of its attractions. Until this year there was room for only 20 guests in nine units arranged around a sparkling pool. Seven units have fully equipped kitchens, allowing you to eat in when you



Top: At day's end a guest relaxes in the barbecue area in front of the cabaña, facing the Carib Inn's pier and dive boats. **Above:** Bruce conducts a Buoyancy Control Workshop. **Right:** The two story guesthouse contains three apartments.

desire, either to save money or leave more time for diving. Each unit has comfortable rattan furniture, a small safe and cable TV. There is both air-conditioning and ceiling fans. New this year is a guesthouse adjacent to the resort. Recently remodeled, it has three bedrooms and two baths, making it perfect for two couples/six people. Last year the resort's electricity was updated, thus all of the rooms have 115 volt/50 cycle power.

The Carib Inn offers several dive packages. If you select the unlimited plan you'll be very busy. It provides two single tank boat dives a day, an optional night boat dive and unlimited shore diving. Bruce's two, 25 foot dive boats are docked at a pier in front of the resort. They depart at 8:30 and 1:30 for single tank trips, mostly to sites only 10 to 20 minutes away. This leaves plenty of time for beach dives, an island staple. Bonaire is one of the few places I'll even consider shore diving. That's because the surf can be measured in inches; the dive sites are just a few yards offshore; and the shore begins just a few feet from where you'll park your rental car or van.

Bonaire, just 50 miles off the coast of Venezuela, is 24 miles long and 3 to 7 miles wide. It is home to about 14,000 people, most of whom live in two small towns. On every visit I know the skies will be a beautiful, unpolluted blue, the sun will shine brightly most every day and the air and the water will be warm. The topside temperature averages 82°F year-round; the water temperature, 80°F. Since the island only gets about 22 inches of rain each year (most of it in November), there



is little runoff to degrade visibility, which averages 75 to 80 feet.

THE STAFF

Bruce's staff—they're like family—is one of the many reasons we return to his place time and again. Kitty Handschuh, Carib Inn manager and head PADI instructor, has been with Bruce's operation for nine years. Her knowledge of Bonaire's waters and critters (especially the tiny ones) is phenomenal. Most of the other instructors/boat captains have also been with the Carib Inn for awhile. My group has a special relationship with Linda Baker, a six year veteran, who remains unruffled no matter what we do. There're also JJ Joslin (Kitty's patient, good looking brother), who has been there six years; Tessa Ley (Miss Personality—she's got lots of tales to tell) has been there three; and handsome Ed Diehl, the quiet, always smiling newcomer, has been there just more than a year. Other important staff members include Richie Anthony, a ten year veteran, and Edward Thomas, who has been with Bruce for seven years.

THE DIVING

Carib Inn guests are afforded a great deal of dive freedom. Bruce does not po-



lice his guests, thus you'll not be ordered to return at a certain time or restrict yourself to a maximum depth. (We could hardly be described as wild and crazy divers, we just like to determine our own depth limits and come up when our air supply runs low.) You won't be accompanied U/W, either, unless you request guide services.

There are island rules, however. All divers are assessed an annual fee of \$10, which goes to the Bonaire Marine Park for upkeep and management. When you pay the fee you'll be given a plastic tag to attach to your gear. Gloves may not be worn U/W and chemical lights are also banned.

All of the waters surrounding Bonaire and Klein Bonaire, down to a depth of 200 feet, are a marine park. Spearfishing has been banned for 25 years, coral collecting for 21. The abundance and diversity of the marine life you'll encounter are proof the park plan is working.

There is one problem with returning to Bonaire: Should we try new dive sites or visit old favorites? Since Bonaire and Klein Bonaire (a tiny island one-half mile off its west coast) have more than 80 moored dive sites there's a lot to choose
(Continued on Page 123)

Monterey Dive Festival & Nikonos Shootout

October 17 to 20

BY JANET SEVERO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AL HUELGA

October in Monterey offers divers the clearest water and best weather of the year. With that in mind, the Northern California Scuba Retailers and Nikon have put together a weekend of activities that fall under the umbrella of The Monterey Dive Festival. Mark your calendars for the weekend of October 18—you don't want to miss this event. Just by attending you will be entered in a drawing to win a trip on the *Kona Aggressor*.

Topside activities will be headquartered at the Monterey Convention Center. The activities will include an exposition of diving products and worldwide travel destinations as well as seminars on travel, equipment, nitrox, photography and DAN's Diver Research Program. On Saturday night there will be a film festival, hosted by the Monterey Peninsula Underwater Photographic Society, and a party sponsored by the Nikonos Shootout, DAN and the NC-SRA. This divers' party will be complete with food, drinks and a live band.

There will be plenty of opportunities for divers and nondivers to get wet, so bring the whole family. Nondivers can experience scuba with the Discover Diving Program that will be offered in the Marriott pool on Saturday and Sunday. Monterey is known for its beach diving and equipment manufacturers will be at the water's edge offering demos of the latest gear. Navigation and buoyancy workshops will take place throughout the weekend. On Sunday, the local dive operators will be offering one tank boat dives for just \$15.

The third annual Nikonos Shootout will be held in Monterey from October 17 to 20. The Shootout is free and photographers of all levels are encouraged to participate. The Shootout is a photo contest with tens of thousands of dollars in prizes and much more. It is a perfect combination of education, competition and

fun. Professional underwater photographers Frank Fennell, Bill Gleason and Marty Snyderman will present lectures on techniques and will be available to answer individual questions. In addition to prizes for winning photos there will be a drawing and one lucky contestant will win a Quicksilver inflatable with 15 hp Mercury outboard.

For information and preregistration for The Monterey Dive Festival, write to: NC-SRA at 2351 South Shore #45, Alameda, CA 94501; contact your Northern California Scuba Retailer Association store; or call Ed Whitt at (800) 675-3483. You can preregister for the Nikonos Shootout by calling WaterHouse Photo Tours at (800) 272-9122, (305) 451-2228 or faxing (305) 451-5147. 🐬



photo/courtesy Quicksilver

Above: A Quicksilver inflatable and 15 hp Mercury Marine outboard will be the doorprize at the Awards Ceremony.



Nikonos Shootout participants will find many exciting photo subjects in Monterey waters, the California Sea Otter (right) among them.



SKIN DIVER MAGAZINE'S

SNORKELING

•TOURBOOK•

**Snorkeling
Hot Spots
Around the
World**

**Getting to
Know the
Butterflies**

**Snorkel
Vests**

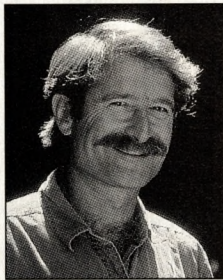
**Coral Reef
Development**

PHOTO/BILL GLEASON

Snorkeler's Perspective

The Wonders of the Reef

BY JOEL SIMON



I love to window shop. Strolling along city avenues visually savoring the colorful storefront displays, neatly arranged offices and bustling cafes has fascinated me since childhood. But if I had to pick any window in the world, it would be the sumptuous panes of large aquariums. These windows were my childhood portals to the underwater world. The creatures behind the glass filled me with wonder and the urge to join in their mysterious world. But no matter how close I scrunched my face to the glass, I remained on the outside—looking in.

As a snorkeler, those large panes of aquarium glass are reduced to a simple faceplate, a portable window that opens my eyes to a far grander vista than any aquarium. The childhood feelings of wonder have grown through experience and education. The big difference is that I'm now on the inside, immersed in that mysterious world—looking out.

Throughout the entire range of exploration, from first impressions to scientific inquiry, the coral reef is fascinating. The novice snorkeler sees a vibrant, captivating tapestry of sea life. The seabed is alive. Corals, sponges, anemones and their equally bizarre neighbors, tubeworms, urchins and crinoids, are the products of eons of evolution. The beginner perceives these as strange, wondrous, undefined objects: red, blue, yellow and green; tall, flat, skinny, squat; swimming, slithering, swaying. The neophyte views the reef as one bewildering, thriving organism, cloaked with magic and mystery.

Experience breeds familiarity and many snorkelers refine their appreciation by learning to identify individual species. Different kinds of fish gradually assume distinct and singular characteristics. Parrotfish, angelfish, Trumpetfish, butterflyfish and more become as easily recognized as relatives at a family reunion. Differentiation among corals becomes apparent: reef-builders such as

spherical brain, branching Elkhorn and massive Star Corals play counterpoint to undulating seafans, gorgonians and other soft corals. Hollow purple arms are now known to be tube sponges. What were previously random drops of color are recognized as Christmas Tree Worms. Mystery fades as the enigmatic becomes the obvious.

The treasure hunt now begins in earnest. Many creatures survive only by their camouflaging coloration and obscure haunts. As the snorkeler's observational skills become more finely honed, scorpionfish, flounders, octopus and eels gradually reveal themselves. The small becomes significant. Nudibranchs, hermit crabs and diminutive shrimp unveil their presence.

Recognizing the reef's inhabitants is gratifying but far from an end in itself. For many it is an invitation to explore the ecology, truly a realm of intrigue. As snorkelers we have a splendid opportunity to view many behavioral aspects of reef life: feeding, protection, reproduction. We can also observe, appreciate and speculate on the unique relationships that exist among the myriad creatures of the reef. These are the crucial elements that inextricably bind individual creatures, dictate survival or extinction and form the social fabric of the reef community.

Many of these complex associations are not yet fully understood and still exceed the investigative ability of modern science. Numerous previous theories on reef ecology have proven incorrect and undoubtedly today's answers will raise tomorrow's questions. The mystery returns. Primitive cultures often described unexplained phenomena as magic and, in this sense, the reef is, and will remain, full of magic.

Coral reefs are amazing. This elaborate living network harbors more species of plants and animals, in greater abundance and proximity than any other ecosystem on the planet. Whether you are a novice taking your first glimpse or an experienced snorkeler probing its innermost secrets, a simple mask will continue to be a marvelous window into this extraordinary world of wonder. 🐠

Inside Snorkeling Tourbook

Brought to you by:

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Stephen Frink, **Contributing Editor**

Snorkeler's Gearbag



*Snorkel Vests:
Nuisance or
Necessity?*

A Delicate Balance



*Coral Reef
Development:
History in the
Making*

Life on a Shallow Reef



*Getting to Know
the Butterflies:
Colorful
Fish that Fiit*

Bon Voyage

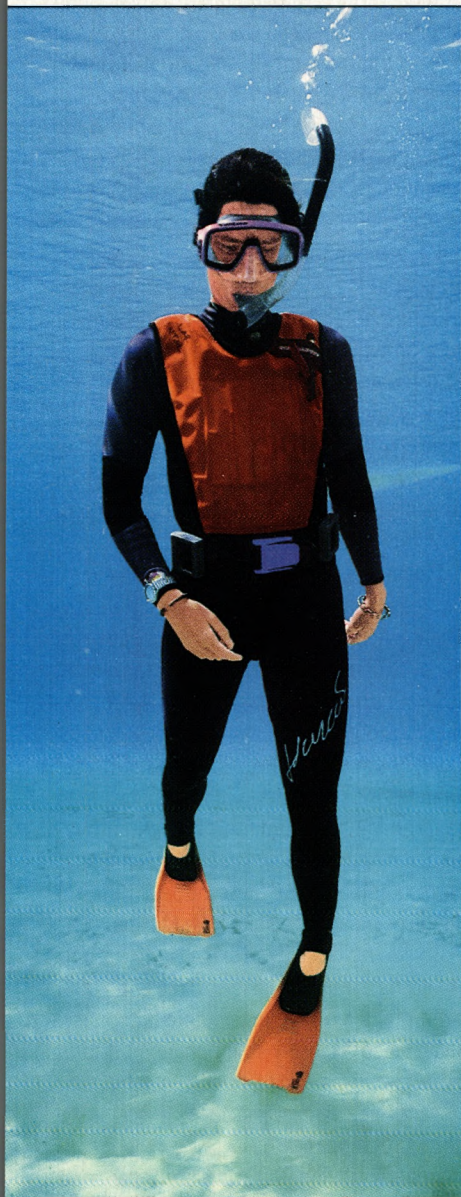


*Snorkeling
Hot Spots:
A Global
Perspective*



Snorkel Vests: Nuisance or Necessity?

BY TAMARA COLLINS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL GLEASON



To be without a care in the world is ideal if you want to truly lose yourself in the myriad forms of life on a lush reef. You want to breathe easy, see clearly and float effortlessly—not exactly a natural condition for humans immersed in water. Since muscle mass counteracts the buoyancy of water, snorkelers may need some means of support to rest comfortably at the surface. Support can be achieved through natural flotation techniques or a snorkeling vest. You can float unencumbered, building confidence in your ability to depend on yourself or find

tures and corrosion from the elements. Adjustable straps are also significant. The predominant complaint from snorkelers is a vest's tendency to ride up under the chin. Proper waist and crotch straps will hold the vest in place and offset this tendency.

Vests are not just for novices. Expert freedivers may use them as well, opting for safety and dependable flotation after a par-

IN BRIEF

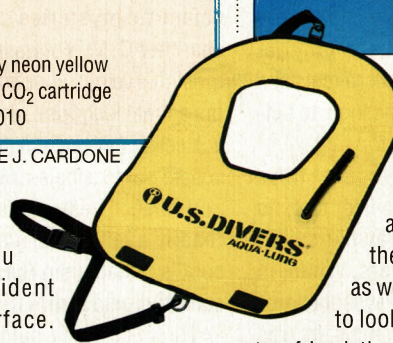
U.S. Divers' Snorkeling Vest

Material: Polyurethane coated nylon
Features: Oral inflator/overpressure valve, 16 gram CO₂ cartridge, adjustable waist and torso straps
Sizes: One size
Colors: High visibility neon yellow
Price: \$75; \$95 with CO₂ cartridge
Phone: (714) 540-8010

PHOTO/BONNIE J. CARDONE

serenity in the form of an air filled vest that will keep you comfortable, confident and safe at the surface. The choice is yours.

Most snorkeling vests are simple, streamlined and bare bones. They consist of a single bladder that is inflated manually through a hose attached near the shoulder and a CO₂ cartridge that, when triggered during an emergency, will inflate the vest automatically. The vest material is an important factor—it must be strong and durable to resist punc-



ticularly vigorous plunge into the depths.

Snorkeling vests have many advantages—safety and relaxation are obvious but the reef may benefit from them as well. If you want to lift your head to look out on the horizon or speak

to a friend, the vest will keep your body horizontal in the water, allowing you to simply lift your head. You won't need to stand or tread water—an action that may damage the reef.

Snorkeling vests are a matter of personal preference. Be it through the strength of your abilities or the dependability of a device, security, peace of mind and confidence are a snorkeler's ultimate goal.



Coral Reef Development: History in the Making

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOEL SIMON

Coral reefs are complex, enduring, magnificent—dynamic living structures of geologic proportions. They are among our planet's most prolific and intricately interrelated ecosystems. They are also the planet's oldest natural community. Snorkelers floating above a coral reef are immediately struck with the teeming variety of life. Spread before them is a panorama of eons of development, the progeny of the sea's entire evolutionary process, a history of a billion years or more. All major taxonomic levels are present, from single-celled algae, invertebrates still without terrestrial counterparts, to fish, reptiles and the largest mammals to ever grace this earth.

The fossil record reveals the ancestry of this glorious congress, many of which have kin embedded in sedimentary layers from 50 to 100 million years ago. Today's reefs are simply the most recent link in a lengthy genetic chain. Understanding modern reefs and especially corals will give us the tools to better decipher their intriguing history.

For centuries corals were thought to be plants. They have no heads, tails or feet; no eyes, no ears. They don't crawl or swim. Close-up they look like flowers. When, in 1723, naturalist Jean Andre' Peyssonel proposed that corals might be animals, he was functionally expelled from the French Academy of Sciences. Today we know he was right. Corals, along with jellyfish and anemones, are members of a large and varied group of animals called Cnidarians: round little creatures with tentacles surrounding a mouth. In the South Pacific alone, more than 700 species of coral have been identified so far.

Individually, most corals measure less than half an inch across, yet collectively they have built the largest organic structures on earth. The Great Barrier Reef stretches more than 1,250 miles along Australia's eastern shore and the barrier reef bordering Mexico, Belize and Honduras is nearly as large. Although solitary corals are found in all seas and to depths exceeding 15,000 feet, reef building corals form a vast shallow living wreath centered along the earth's equator—a setting scientists would not have expected to host such robust communities.

Tropical seas are nearly devoid of nutrients, which is one reason the water is usually clear. Yet reefs that thrive within them are among the planet's most prolific living systems. How so much life could be sustained on so little food remained one of the greatest scientific mysteries until 1929 when researcher C. M. Yonge unraveled one of the most marvelous cooperative relationships in the animal kingdom. Living within the stomach cells of all reef building corals are microscopic plants, single-celled algae called zooxanthellae. These algae take advantage of readily available organic waste from the coral's metabolism (basically fertilizer) and carbon dioxide from the coral's respiration and produce usable nutrients and oxygen.

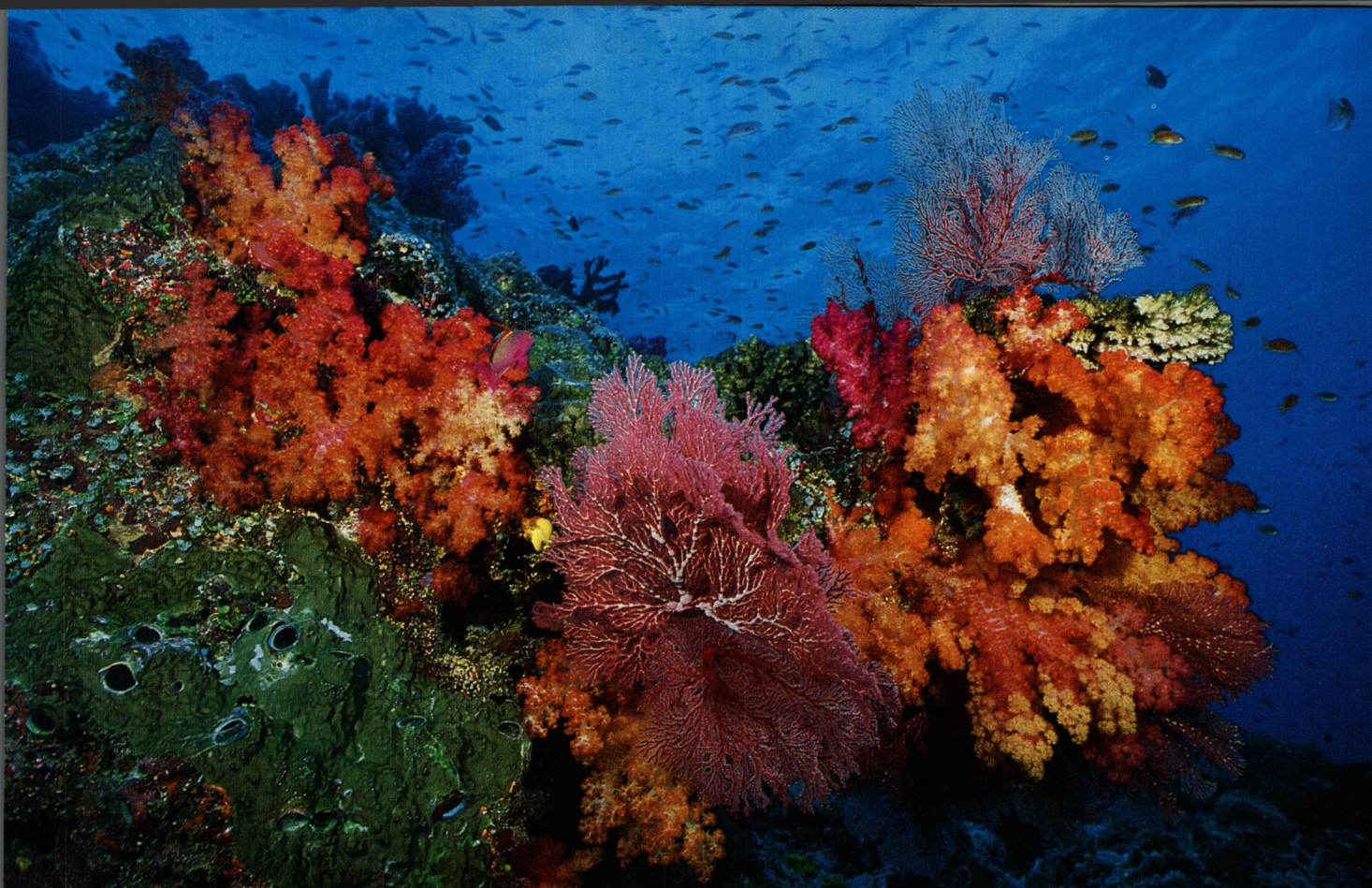
This is precisely what a coral animal needs to grow. Just as with plants on land, in this remarkable recipe one more ingredient is necessary for survival: sunlight for photosynthesis. Although the reasons are unclear, it seems this relationship also mandates water temperatures above 72°F. Limited by dependencies on sunlight and warmth, reef building corals are constrained to clear, shallow,

tropical waters, making them conveniently accessible to snorkelers and scuba divers.

Reef building corals, like most animals, have a calcium skeleton. As a coral grows upward (or outward) to maximize exposure to sunlight, it deposits calcium around its base. Fast growing corals may expand one inch per year although most are much slower. During the day, when the photosynthetic algae are most productive, corals grow approximately 14 times faster than at night. Clouds can reduce growth by half. Eventually, this calcium, which over time may be hundreds of feet thick, becomes the actual reef structure. The coral animal essentially becomes a living veneer over the bones of its ancestors, which contain significant clues to the ancient history of both coral and our world.

The calcium skeleton provides an excellent fossil record and core samples yield fascinating geological insights. Corals have survived, in one form or another, for more than 500 million years. Modern corals first appeared about 230 million years ago, when today's continents were a single land mass. Changes in the elevation of the sea owing to passing ice ages and tectonic land movements are accurately reflected by ancestral reefs, such as the Guadeloupe Mountain Range between Texas and New Mexico.

Corals leave daily growth rings in their skeletons, similar to those of trees. In 1963, John Wells made a remarkable discovery. Because corals grow so much faster during the day when the algae are active, careful study of these rings in fossilized corals indicates the earth's rotation may be slowing owing to atmospheric friction. Coral core samples from approximately 400 million years ago imply the



Devonian year had nearly 400 days!

Other inferences are equally astounding. Fossilized corals from the Cretaceous period, some 100 million years ago, are found at 50° north latitude, roughly equivalent to Vancouver, London and the southern tip of the Aleutian Islands. Conversely, similarly dated corals extend to only about 20° present south



latitude promoting theories that the earth rotated on an axis far different than that of today. Using the same techniques, corals from Ordovician times, roughly 500 million years ago, indicate the North

Pole may have been near Hawaii and the South Pole off the coast of West Africa!

While these prototypical coral communities lie sequestered in the annals of extinction, many of today's reefs originated in relatively ancient times. Some atolls of the central Pacific are built on coral foundations borne of the Eocene era some 50 million

Some modern coral formations are built upon an ancestral skeleton 50 million years old. This intricate, complex and prolific community is the planet's oldest living ecosystem.

years back. The Great Barrier Reef, at least the northern section, had its birthday in the Miocene more than 25 million years ago.

To better understand their survival over the millennia, it is necessary to examine reproductive strategies. Corals are mass spawners, shedding gametes directly into open water. At the whim of oceanic currents, larval forms are carried far and wide in search of suitable areas for colonization.

The physiological prosperity of corals is crucial—where there are reefs, other crea-

tures follow. Coral reefs harbor more species of plants and animals than any other ecosystem on earth.

Cooperative yet competitive, complex, yet stable, successfully mixing ancient organisms with modern ones—these elements, when integrated, endow the overall ecology with a resilience and durability to withstand the inevitable pressures of time. On your next snorkeling sojourn above a coral reef, celebrate this miraculous living chronicle. In fact, have the time of your life. 🐠





Getting to Know the Butterflies: Colorful Fish that Flit

BY PAUL HUMANN AND NED DELOACH



Butterflyfish (Chaetodontidae, pronounced key-toe-DON-ti-day) are one of the most delightful groups of fish observed by snorkelers. There are 114 family members worldwide; only six inhabit our region. Four species are prominent, conspicuous members of reef communities. Their small size (less than six inches), rounded bodies and slightly concave foreheads easily distinguish them from angelfish, which are larger, have rounded foreheads and generally exhibit elongated dorsal and anal fins.

Reminiscent of their butterfly namesake, these small, colorful fish spend their days flitting about shallow to deep reefs, dock pilings and rubble fields using keen eyesight to search for tiny worms and other invertebrates. Butterflies generally travel singly or in pairs within a rather limited range. At dusk they find shelter in a reef recess and become inactive. As they settle in for the night, their daytime colors pale and markings change.

Life is much simpler for fishwatchers when a fish's distinctive feature (a marking or anatomical feature that distinguishes it from a similar appearing species) is part of its common name. Fortunately, this is the case for all four butterflies described in this article. Let's take a look at **Banded Butterflyfish** first. Their two dark midbody bands make them a snap to identify by simply associating the bands with the species' name. Note the dark band running through the eye; at first, this

Above left: Banded Butterflyfish (Chaetodon striatus) have black midbody bands and a border on the rear of the body. Left: Spottfin Butterflyfish (Chaetodon ocellatus) have a black dot on the edge of the rear dorsal fin.



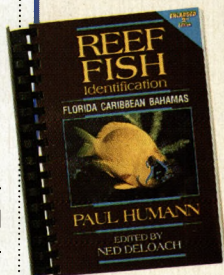
*The adult Four-eye Butterflyfish (*C. capistratus*)—above right—is easily identified by the single black spot ringed in white on the rear body. Juvenile butterflies display distinctly different markings. The baby Four-eye (above) has two black spots and two wide, dusky body bars. Below: Longsnout Butterflyfish (*C. aculeatus*) have a long pointed snout and are usually solitary.*

might seem a distinctive feature until you notice that similar markings are present in all four species. Eye bands, believed to be a survival adaptation of several fish species, help camouflage the location of their true eyes. This characteristic confuses potential predators as to the direction the little fish will dart when attacked.

Four-eye Butterflyfish are also easy to recognize and recall. Their distinctive feature is

THE BIBLE OF FISHWATCHING

Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach are author and editor of the award winning series



Reef Fish Identification, Reef Creature Identification and Reef Coral Identification—Florida, Caribbean, Bahamas available at your local dive retailer or directly from New World Publications at (800) 737-6558.

the black spot, ringed in white, on the rear body. This characteristic, known as a false eyespot, is thought to further befuddle predators as to correct location of the true eye. If you count the two real eyes and the two false

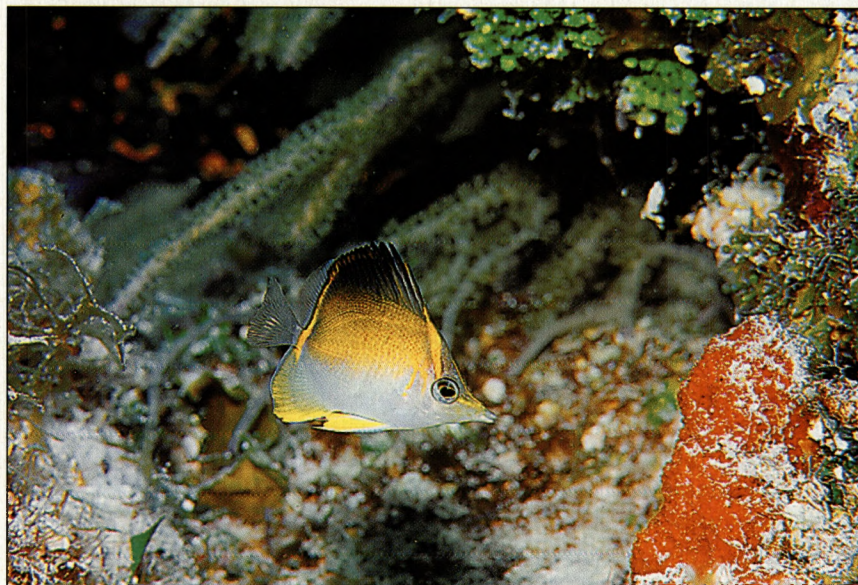
eyespot, you quickly come up with the species' name, Four-eye Butterflyfish.

Identification of **Spotfin Butterflyfish** is a bit trickier. Again, their common name is the fishes' distinctive feature—a small, black dot on the outer margin of the rear dorsal fin. These are the only family members with a dot on any fin and also the only species with all yellow fins. However, if you try to remember the fin color as the distinctive feature it will be of no help associating it with the Spotfin's name.

Longsnout Butterflyfish break the traditional family mold by varying somewhat from their relatives in size, shape, habitat and behavior. Longsnouts average only two to three inches in length, have longer, even more pointed snouts, generally inhabit deeper reefs and walls, are more wary of divers and are almost always solitary. To some, the Longsnouts' high dorsal fin resembles a new wave hairdo. Of course, their distinctive snouts make their name a cinch to remember.

Juvenile butterflyfish are not only smaller than adults but they also display distinctly different markings. It is thought that these clear differentiations limit territorial aggression from their elders while the little fellows grow. Juveniles tend to live near protective niches in shallow patch reefs and seagrass beds. They are occasionally sighted hovering close to the openings of discarded conch shells. The pictured juvenile Four-eye has an extra set of ocellated spots and pale bands; these markings disappear as the fish matures.

During your next reef snorkel see how many butterflyfish species you can identify. It will be a great help to quickly review this article or the butterflyfish section in *Reef Fish Identification* before your trip. 





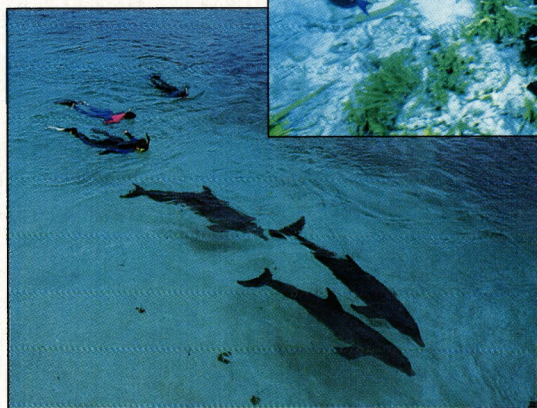
Snorkeling Hot Spots: A Global Perspective

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY BILL GLEASON

Since we began publishing Snorkeling Tourbook in June, SKIN DIVER has received lots of mail from readers about the new feature. Many of these letters requested information about snorkeling sites around the world and more destination coverage in future issues.

We're listening to you, and future issues will contain expanded coverage of snorkeling areas around the globe. It does take time, however, to get writers around the world and many of the areas we visit are, unfortunately, set up to provide high quality service only for scuba divers, not snorkelers! Of course, part of the reason we launched Snorkeling Tourbook was to show water-sports operators around the world that snorkelers are indeed first class citizens, worthy of specialized attention.

That message is catching on slowly. Pioneer efforts in the Out Islands of The Bahamas and on the Dutch Caribbean island of Bonaire are paying off. Operators around the world are now looking to upgrade their snorkel operations to provide all the amenities you would expect on a snorkeling vacation—good guides, boats, sites and educational experiences for travelers of all ages. We'll report on both the quality of the snorkeling experience and the



operators and inform you of their procedures—whether they cater to you in a personalized, guided manner or send you off in the direction of the beach hotel (where the snorkeling is almost always mediocre).

While we're working on those future issues, I would like to share some of my snorkeling experiences gathered in 20 plus years of exploring the oceans with both snorkel and scuba. My travel experiences may give you an idea of the destinations you would

Snorkeling hot spots worldwide offer an incredible diversity of experiences—dolphins in The Bahamas; shallow reefs of New Guinea and Fiji; and even migrating whales.

choose as your ultimate snorkeling paradise.

THE CARIBBEAN

THE BAHAMAS: Perhaps no destination in the world matches the diversity of snorkeling found in the cays and islands of The

Bahamas. Whether it's gliding on the surface next to a pod of dolphins or exploring shallow reefs and sandy bays, The Bahamas should rank high on any snorkeler's list. Guided services are available in the Out Islands; snorkeling tours in Nassau and Freeport are also offered. The south side of Nassau is quiet, away from the hustle and bustle of downtown and Paradise Island and offers some pristine shallow reefs.

For information on the Out Islands, contact Bahama Out Islands Promotion Board, 1100 Lee Wagener Boulevard, Suite 206, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33315; (800) OUT-ISLANDS, (800) 688-4752.

BONAIRE, NETHERLANDS ANTILLES: This small, peaceful island has long been a Mecca for scuba divers but relatively unknown by other travelers. The snorkeling is superb and operators have special education programs geared for snorkelers. For information on the best snorkel operators on Bonaire at the present time, contact the Tourism Corporation Bonaire, 1 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10022; (800) U-BONAIR.

BAY ISLANDS, HONDURAS: In the Bay Islands, traveling snorkelers and divers can choose to stay on Roatan, Guanaja or Utila. Again, these

islands built their reputation on scuba but are getting into the snorkeling game as well. The little visited island of Barbareta may have the Caribbean's finest shallow water snorkeling. English is widely spoken on these offshore islands and the tropics have never been better. For information, contact Honduras Institute of Tourism, P.O. Box 140458, Coral Gables, Florida 33114-0458; (800) 410-9608.

THE PACIFIC

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Along with the Solomon Islands, this area of the world boasts incredible shallow reefs and teems with marine life. Travel services are in the development stage, particularly in those areas with the greatest snorkeling. Stay tuned, but dream anyway.

Fiji: With more than 800 different islands, Fiji offers some world-class snorkeling as well as some of the friendliest hosts you'll ever encounter! The small islands of Taveuni and Vanua Levu in the north and Kadavu and Beqa to south of the main island of Viti Levu are especially spectacular!

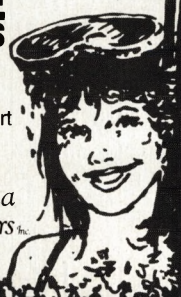
WHALES AND DOLPHINS: There are Whale Sharks in the Sea of Cortez, Sperm Whales off Dominica (eastern Caribbean), migrating Humpbacks in The Bahamas and Turks &

Caicos and Gray Whales in the Pacific's Scammon's Lagoon. I've snorkeled with all of them and don't think there's a better in-water experience to be had. Snorkeling with dolphins is a close second and the potential to get in the water with them is almost universal. During certain months, snorkeling the Bahama Banks can offer a virtual guarantee for dolphin encounters.

That's just a brief taste of future adventures in Snorkeling Tourbook. As your travels uncover new and exciting snorkeling experiences, please write and let us know about them!

Bonaire's Guided Snorkeling Centers

The businesses listed in this section offer specialized services for visiting snorkelers. All of the resorts offer a daily, ongoing program of reef education and fish identification, giving snorkelers a unique experience. All of the Snorkel Tours featured in the Bonaire Guided Snorkeling Program begin with a one-half hour Slide Show followed by a guided tour to some of the Caribbean's finest shallow coral reefs!

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**TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICK FREHSEE**

Combining luxury living with island ambiance is the special covenant of lovely Ramon's Village on Ambergris Caye, Belize. The view is tantalizing—a thatch roof village of modern construction reflecting traditional Maya inspired architecture strewn along a palm dotted white sand beach. You enter from a sand street through an archway of local wood. Ramon's is only a two minute ride in the resort's golf cart from the San Pedro airport.

Ramon's Village is both a beautiful beach resort and a dedicated dive resort. It faces the sea—a panorama of sand, sea and sky. Without straining, it is easy to see the line of wispy foam that marks the longest reef in the Western Hemisphere just one-half mile away. To access that reef, there is a fleet of boats, a full service dive shop and a complete photo/video center right on the resort dock. With a handsome new dive boat, *Miss Gina*, Ramon's is now outfitted to both access miles of barrier reef practically at its doorstep and comfortably run day trips to Lighthouse Reef and the Turneffe Islands, two of Belize's very best dive destinations.

Ramon's has 60 bungalows spread across 1,000 feet of sand and greenery. Some are on the beach; others are grouped around attractive, manicured courtyards. Many of the bungalows are now air-conditioned; others are cooled by ceiling fans. The architecture takes advantage of the nearly constant light tropical breeze. There are a few two bedroom suites that include a kitchen. The room interiors are handsome and island inspired, warmed by local wood, a tropical motif and wicker furniture.

The social focus at Ramon's is a lovely T-shaped freshwater pool and the indoor and outdoor restaurant at the geographic center of the resort. This main building group also contains a boutique and gift shop (Ramon's is known for its T-shirts and other graphics), the offices, poolside lounge and social decks. The restaurant serves three excellent meals a day, including a complete breakfast menu and great seafood, continental and island cuisine. Directly out from the pool is a wooden dock that leads through the dive and photo center to a series of boat slips. Dive shop manager Rick Sutherland oversees a staff of 20 and a fleet of six boats. Marlen and Elbert are the fulltime instructors who offer resort, open water and a wide range of specialty courses, including a certification in underwater photography.

The new flagship is the sparkling *Miss Gina*, a Pro 42 jet-powered custom boat. Handsome and practical, *Miss Gina* is re-



Ramon's Ambergris Caye's Gateway to Belize's Barrier Reef



Top: The pride of Ramon's fleet, the new, 42 foot *Miss Gina*, visits the Turneffe Islands, Lighthouse Reef and the Blue Hole. Above: A Giant Barrel Sponge displays a tangled web of Staghorn Corals.

served for full day trips. Five other medium sized, Ambergris Caye style vessels are available—24 to 28 foot open hull vessels usually powered by twin outboards. These boats are both speedy and stable in the higher seas sometimes encountered outside the reef. Each vessel carries six to eight divers, a marine radio and standard safety equipment. The Maya-Mexican divemasters and captains are all experienced and friendly.

Boats are normally scheduled for two tank morning trips and are available for a single tank afternoon and/or night dive. Full sets of modern rental gear are available at the dive shop. Boats, gear rinse, wet storage and showers are all grouped



at the dive center.

New this year at Ramon's is the Joe Miller Photo Pro Center, on the dock right around the corner from the dive center. Joe is an accomplished photographer/videographer and Belize's best known underwater photographer. He, his wife Valen or a staff member are in charge of this excellent outlet, which includes slide film and processing, Sony video rental, Nikonos and Sea & Sea camera and strobe rentals, slide film and processing, advanced instruction and emergency Nikonos repair.

Ambergris Caye is a large, narrow island about 25 miles long (actually a peninsula extending from Yucatan that was converted into an island when the Maya cut a canal at the northern end during ancient times). A true barrier reef, part of the Great Maya Reef, also known as the Belize Barrier Reef or Great Western Barrier Reef, lies just offshore. This creates a continuous reef and wall for most of the distance of the island, interrupted only occasionally by narrow cuts. These allow access to the outside of the reef.

Two kinds of dive sites are generally

available. The first is a shallow reef garden with a good display of marine life and a sloping or vertical wall usually pocked with caverns, canyons and swim-throughs. The best site for marine life is found a short boat ride south of Ramon's—a main reef channel called **Hol Chan**, "big channel" in the Yucatecan Maya language. This is the first marine park established in Belize. As the result of this protection, Hol Chan has become a parade of fish. Another excellent shallow reef is found north of the resort at **Mexico Rocks**.

A good example of a deep site easily reached from Ramon's is **M and M Caverns**. Here divers will find enormous fissures and swim-throughs to explore.

The all day trip aboard *Miss Gina* reaches real world-class dive sites. Lighthouse Reef Atoll features sites such as **Silver Caves** and **Halfmoon Caye Wall**, two of the best drop-offs in the Caribbean. Turneffe Islands Atoll presents a fish-filled spectacle at **The Elbow**, at the southern tip of the atoll. A dive in the **Great Blue Hole**, almost in the middle of Lighthouse Reef, is a unique diving experience, not unlike a visit to a strange planet. Reservations for

this spectacular trip should be made at least 24 hours in advance to ensure space.

San Pedro Town, a short five minute walk from the resort, is both a local village



TACA has modern 767 and 737 aircraft and flies nonstop to Belize daily from the U.S. gateways of Miami, New Orleans and Houston, with immediate connections from Los Angeles and San Francisco.

and a tourist town. Shops, bars and restaurants abound. Other above-water treats include day trips to several Maya sites on the mainland. Ramon's offers a weekly boat trip to the ruins of Altun-ha. There are also several glassbottom outrigger boats and other watersports available at the resort.

Flights from Belize City to San Pedro are available every hour of daylight with several local carriers.

For information or reservations, contact Ramon's Village at (800) 624-4215; (601) 649-1900; fax (601) 649-1996.

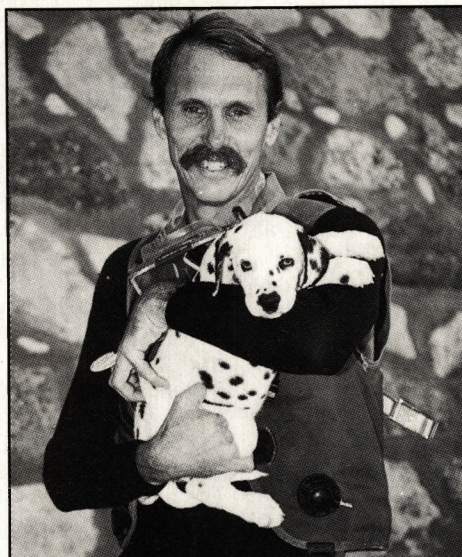


Above: A sparkling freshwater pool is the social center of this tranquil resort, where thatched cabañas and an aboriginal totem (right) add a rustic beauty. Below: Joe and Valen Miller offer complete photo and video services from the Joe Miller Photo Pro Center.



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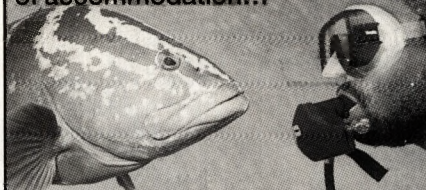
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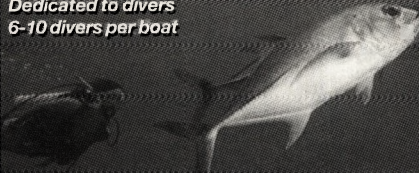
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Dive Notes

SEAPLANE EXPEDITIONS: *Rainbow Hunter* is a six passenger Grumman Albatross equipped to fly six divers to otherwise unreachable atolls and reefs in the Pacific. It will begin a series of six day expeditions December 28 that fly from Palau to untouched spots, such as Ulithi, Ngulu and Helen's Point.



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FREESTYLE'S NEW DIVE WATCHES:

FreeStyle USA has expanded its line of dive watches to include more stainless steel bands for men and women.

The standout in the line is the new Hammerhead Night Vision watch with an



extra long, double-lock, stainless steel watchband. Constructed with a solid stainless steel case, the Hammerhead Night Vision is depth rated to 660 feet, features bright blue illumination and a ratcheted bezel. It is available in men's and women's sizes and covered by FreeStyle's 10 year limited warranty.

FreeStyle watches are available where trusted dive equipment is sold. Customers may call (800) 776-6449, extension 118, for the name of their nearest FreeStyle retailer.

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Suggested price for a matched set of a SABA™ first & second stage is \$335⁰⁰.

Call Meltron™ USA (division of Dura Pro Systems, Inc.) at 1-800- 345-6634 for the name of your nearest dealer.

Enraptured by a colorful and flirtatious Queen Angelfish, I was oblivious to everything else on the reef. Only a foot away from it on the gently sloping wall, I was watching through my camera viewfinder waiting for the perfect pose. Suddenly, the entire viewfinder was filled with the brilliant, rippling muscles of an emerald Green Moray Eel! Startled, I pulled back and lowered my camera to get a better look at my curious visitor, now nestled in the coral boulders from which my Queen Angel was long gone.

Immediately by my side, Toucan Diving assistant manager Ursula Würsching asked if I was all right and we both gazed admiringly at the largest, most magnificent Green Moray I have ever seen.

When it decided to move on, I moved with it along the wall—both of us free swimming through the warm, turquoise waters of Bonaire. I looked up through the clear sea and waved at the other divers I knew were watching this unique experience with awe. I was thrilled and reluctantly let my friend descend without me when we reached my depth limit.

Back on the boat, the 30 foot Island Hopper *Green Flash* (what an appropriate name for this particular dive), we were all excited and shared our different views as we returned to our hotel, the brand new Plaza Resort Bonaire. Ursula and her buddy, a diver visiting from Brazil, had been on the shallow crest of the wall and first saw the eel descend toward me. They said it paused above my head and they knew I didn't see it! The other divers, visiting from the U.S. and the Netherlands, watched us swim together and everyone agreed it was about seven to eight feet long and very fat.

I rinsed my camera in the boat's freshwater shower and, as we drank our complimentary juice and dried off with the clean towels the divemaster gave each of us, we relaxed in the sunshine and agreed it had been a very fine dive. Back at the private marina, we were pampered further by the friendly dive staff who handled all our dive equipment.

Toucan Diving, Bonaire's newest dive operation, is on the grounds of the luxurious Plaza Resort Bonaire. Dive shop manager Paul Verbeek has lovingly supervised the complete construction and development of the sports complex and has done a great job anticipating the needs of dive and snorkel guests. Opposite the resort's lighted tennis courts, the entrance sports the dive sign-up boards; the shop's staff provides dive, snorkel and other watersports information in the retail area. There is a large air-conditioned classroom for welcome orientations and the multi-lingual staff members teach introductory diving as well as IDD/NAUI/PADI specialty courses.

A beautiful hardwood deck surrounds

A sprawling field of Elkhorn Coral thrives in Bonaire's Marine Park. Below: A night dive finds the Town Pier alive with feeding Orange Cup Corals.

photo/Jerry Schnabel

Toucan Diving and the Plaza Resort Bonaire

A Luxurious New Resort and a First Class Dive Operation

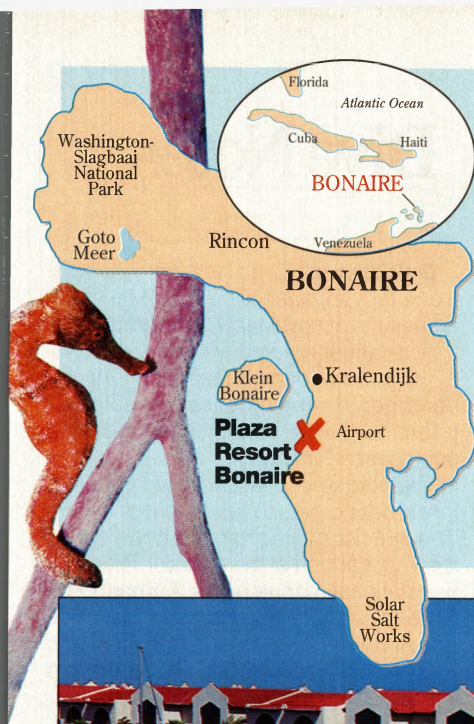
TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY SUSAN SWYGERT



photo/Jerry Schnabel



Toucan Diving's *Green Flash* departs with divers anxious to experience some of Bonaire's renowned diving.



ternoon dives. Each boat carries a maximum of 12 divers, resulting in a comfortable and intimate dive experience. Ocean Kayaks and 13 foot Boston Whalers may be rented for a few hours of tranquil cruising (no diving is allowed from these vessels).

The house reef—named **18 Palms**—is accessed via a beach entry at the northern end of the property and is famous for its school of large Tarpon. The shallow terrace is covered with beautiful formations of Fire Coral and the steep sloping wall is very close to shore and dotted with a great variety of hard corals. Convenient delivery of your dive equipment and tanks to the beach is offered by the dive shop—just tell them what time you want to dive. Friendly and accommodating, this dive

decorate the island. The island stretches from north to south and the protected lee-side provides 26 miles of the finest snorkeling and diving sites. The Bonaire Marine Park has vivid yellow stones inscribed with the sites' names to mark the safe entry points. Much of the coast is either stony or white sand beaches, although the north is characterized by sheer cliffs making access to these sites by boat only. Boat moorings have been installed off Bonaire and Klein Bonaire to protect the fragile coral reef from damage caused by boat anchors.

All divers must pay an annual park entrance fee of U.S. \$10 and obey the rules—no anchoring and no taking of anything live or dead from the reef (except garbage that is not yet part of the reef). Divers are expected to practice proper buoyancy control. The funds collected support the maintenance of the mooring system, research and the continued development of educational programs for Bonaire's children, residents and visitors.

The Plaza Resort Bonaire opened in late 1995 after months of refurbishment, landscaping and new construction. Those who remember the never finished hotel project near the airport will be delighted to hear that an eyesore has been transformed into an extraordinary, luxurious five star resort. The new owner, the Vandervalk Hotel Company, is based in the Netherlands and has more than 62 motels and restaurants in Europe and Curacao. Its interest in acquiring a resort property in Bonaire grew after success with the Curacao Plaza Hotel. The Plaza Resort Bonaire is considered to be "the pearl" in the hotel chain. Martin and Ingrid Vandervalk, the resort's managing directors, are a young, enthusiastic couple who moved to Bonaire with a vision of beauty and attention to every detail that has been fully realized.

The resort beautifully sprawls over more than 12 acres and includes a palm studded white sand beach along the azure ocean, a seaside pool and ocean-view suites. A man-made lagoon stretches inland and is lined by waterfront apartments, suites and wooden walkways leading to the resort's central open-air reception hall, exciting casino (open from noon to 2:00 am) and the elegant Caribbean Point Restaurant. The entire resort has been enhanced by more than 300,000 tropical shrubs and trees; bright colors and bird-song soothe the soul.

The rooms are spacious air-conditioned suites with huge bathrooms and closets and have beautiful rattan furniture—queen sized beds, loveseat, dining table and chairs—a mini-fridge, cable TV with remote, in-room safe, telephone and a private patio or balcony. Maid service is twice daily, the evening turndown



The peaceful grounds of the Plaza Resort Bonaire (above) and its relaxing pool area (right). The Tippy Seagull Bar (below) overlooks Bonaire's turquoise waters.



the complex; wooden walkways, decorated with sunbathing lizards, lead to a cascading waterfall, a soon to be open bar/restaurant and a public changing room with hot showers. The rental counter, rinse tanks and fill station border the lagoon near the separate guest storage facility. Twenty-four hour access to equipment and tanks for unlimited shore diving is guaranteed. The resort's main parking lot is adjacent to the shop—a fleet of Toyota RAV4 utility vehicles are maintained at the resort by ABC Car Rental, so it's easy to load up gear and head out for a private excursion.

The resort's two dive boats, *Green Flash* and *Purple Rain*, regularly depart the marina for one tank morning and af-

facility is guaranteed to grow in popularity as it continues to adjust to the wide variety of guest needs.

Time and time again, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles, has been noted as one of the top ten diving destinations in the world. Reasons for this consistent rating range from its location in the southern Caribbean far below the hurricane belt to the early formation of the Bonaire Marine Park (in 1979—first in the Caribbean). The Marine Park protects all the reefs surrounding Bonaire and Klein Bonaire, a small uninhabited island just off Bonaire's lee coast.

Bonaire is known for its sunshine and steady, cooling trade winds. The climate is dry and arid and many species of cacti



photo/Rande Vaul

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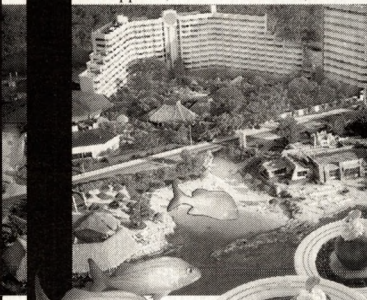


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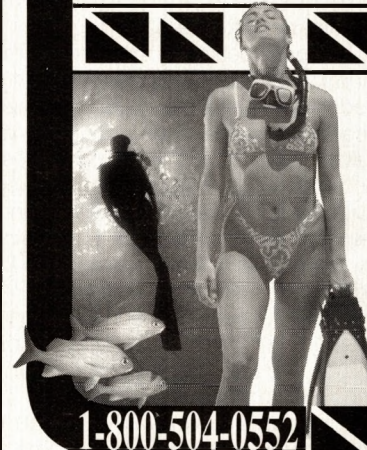
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service is a nice touch and I loved the wake-up service—each day I received a second wake-up call about 10 minutes after the first! How did they know I would roll over and go back to sleep?

Individuals, couples, families and groups can choose from accommodations that range from junior to grand suites with ocean or lagoon views and one or two bedroom apartments with fully equipped kitchens, including microwave ovens and dishwashers.

Special needs are addressed by the extremely capable hotel concierge. Other services and activities offered by the resort range from a large convention room with full audio/visual services to cultural and sports nights to honeymooners having a private dinner served on a moonlit beach. Tropical Travel, in the lobby, specializes in arranging island nature tours, as well as sailing excursions, snorkel and picnic trips to Klein Bonaire or shopping trips to Curacao and Aruba.

The well stocked Plaza Resort Giftshop, offering gifts, gadgets, souvenirs and sundries, and Littman Gifts, known for its fine jewelry and resort wear, are in the main lobby, which is also a photo gallery. Island prints are available for sale through the giftshop. A shopping gallery has just been added near the hotel entrance and an ATM is already operational with a hairdresser and grocery store coming soon.

Choose flexible meal plans or a la carte dining at the air-conditioned Caribbean Point or the Bahama Tree Restaurant on a breezy seaside terrace. On the beach, the casual Coconut Crash serves frosty drinks all day and is a peaceful place to watch a brilliant Caribbean sunset. Every Friday, the new Topsy Seagull Bar hosts the most popular happy hour on the island, with live music by Bonaire's own Kunuku Band, snacks and a dance contest.

Bonaire is well-known as a world-class dive and snorkel destination and this well planned resort will satisfy a host of international visitors looking for a relaxing vacation in comfort and safety with a touch of class.

Special introductory Guided Snorkeling, windsurfing and scuba diving packages are available, including a Seventh Day Free Special. For general information and reservations, call Travel Marketing Services, the Plaza Resort Bonaire's U.S. representative, at (800) 766-6016 or (617) 821-1012; fax (617) 821-1568. To reach the resort directly, call (011) 599-7-2500 or fax (011) 599-7-7133.

Dive Notes

DIVE BRAZIL: Brazil is a very special place for very special people. The many attractions of northeast Brazil include historical cities, colonial villages, national parks and the region's fascinating African heritage. But the most spectacular attractions are the beautiful beaches and unsurpassed diving.

The northeast coastal area of Brazil offers amazing gifts to adventurous divers. The wrecks of Recife have been called the Truk Lagoon of the Atlantic. There are two national marine parks, Fernando de Noronha and Parque Nacional Marinhas dos Abrolhos. The unusual coral reef and volcanic rock formations provide divers with amazing underwater spectacles.

The typical itinerary includes the following: departure from Miami to Recife, a leisurely lunch and a tour of Olinda or Recife. Guests will spend two days diving the wrecks of Recife and then transfer to Fernando de Noronha, where they will experience four days of world-class diving and the hospitality of the local *pousadas* (small family owned accommodations with home cooked meals). They will return to the mainland at Natal, where guests enjoy dune buggy rides and glorious beaches and then depart Natal for Miami on the tenth day. Optional side tours are available to Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Salvador, Iguassu Falls, Buenos Aires, Pantanal Wetlands and the Amazon Jungle region.

Duet Travel has complete information regarding pricing, air fare, hotels and transfers in all cities. Call for free brochures and videos (available for a nominal fee). Call (888) 6-BRAZIL for more information or fax (303) 989-5343.

THE NIKONOS OPEN—GRAND CAYMAN:

A new photo event is scheduled April 12 to 19, 1997, on Grand Cayman. Developed with REEF (Reef Education and Environmental Foundation), the Nikonos Open will feature lectures on marine life behavior and habitat, plus tips to assist in identification from REEF executive director Laddie Akins. There will also be lectures on how to take better underwater pictures by photographer Stephen Frink. Nikon's Frank Fennell and SKIN DIVER Magazine's Bill Gleason will be on hand to assist.

Photographers are rewarded for finding and photographing as many fish as possible from a master list compiled by REEF. Additional points will be awarded for the relative scarcity of the subject, regardless of photo image quality. Unlike the Nikonos

Shootout, which is tied to photographic excellence, the Nikonos Open is intended to be both fun and to impart fresh insights about Grand Cayman's reef fish. Free film from Eastman Kodak will be provided (one roll per day); contestants are invited to shoot a second roll if they wish. Film processing (E-6) will be done on the island and judges will assist with fish identification to help compile the daily point tally. The Nikonos Open is designed for photographers of all levels; in particular, first time and novice photographers.

The Nikonos Open will be held at Treasure Island Resort and all diving will be done with Parrot's Landing.

Package prices for the Nikonos Open start at \$1,095 per person double occupancy and include two tank boat dives daily (excluding day of arrival and departure), tanks and weightbelts, accommodations at Treasure Island Resort and all Nikonos Open festivities. Film processing and meals are extra. For further information or reservations, phone Water-House Photo Tours at (800) 272-9122 or fax (305) 451-5147. 🐠

SHIPWRECK RESEARCH ASSISTANCE NEEDED: Dan Berg, author of 10 shipwreck related books and the producer of the *Dive Wreck Valley* TV series, is currently working on a new CD-ROM, *Wreck Valley CD*. It will contain historical information, historical and artifact photographs, U/W sketches, sidescan images and U/W video. The CD will also include Fish Havens and Treasure Wrecks and a list of Eastern Dive Boat Association vessels. Scheduled for release this fall, it will contain information on shipwrecks off the New Jersey and Long Island coasts as well as the Long Island Sound.

Berg is requesting any artifact photographs, sketches, video or any first-hand diver information. Also, if you are diving any of the lesser known wrecks off New York, New Jersey or Connecticut and want to have them included please send details.

Any photos or illustrations can be shipped to Aqua Explorers, Inc., 980 Church Street, Baldwin, NY 11510; phone/fax (516) 868-2658. 🐠

ENRICHED AIR IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS: The Cayman Islands Watersports Operators Association (CIWOA) has voted to allow the use of nitrox by any certified enriched air diver. Last December, the CIWOA approved of enriched air for use by its staff instructors and divemasters.

Since December there have been more than 3,000 enriched air dives made with no accidents or incidents. While the unlimited depths of the sheer walls off Cayman still pose a potential problem with oxygen toxicity, enriched air nitrox can be used safely. 🐠

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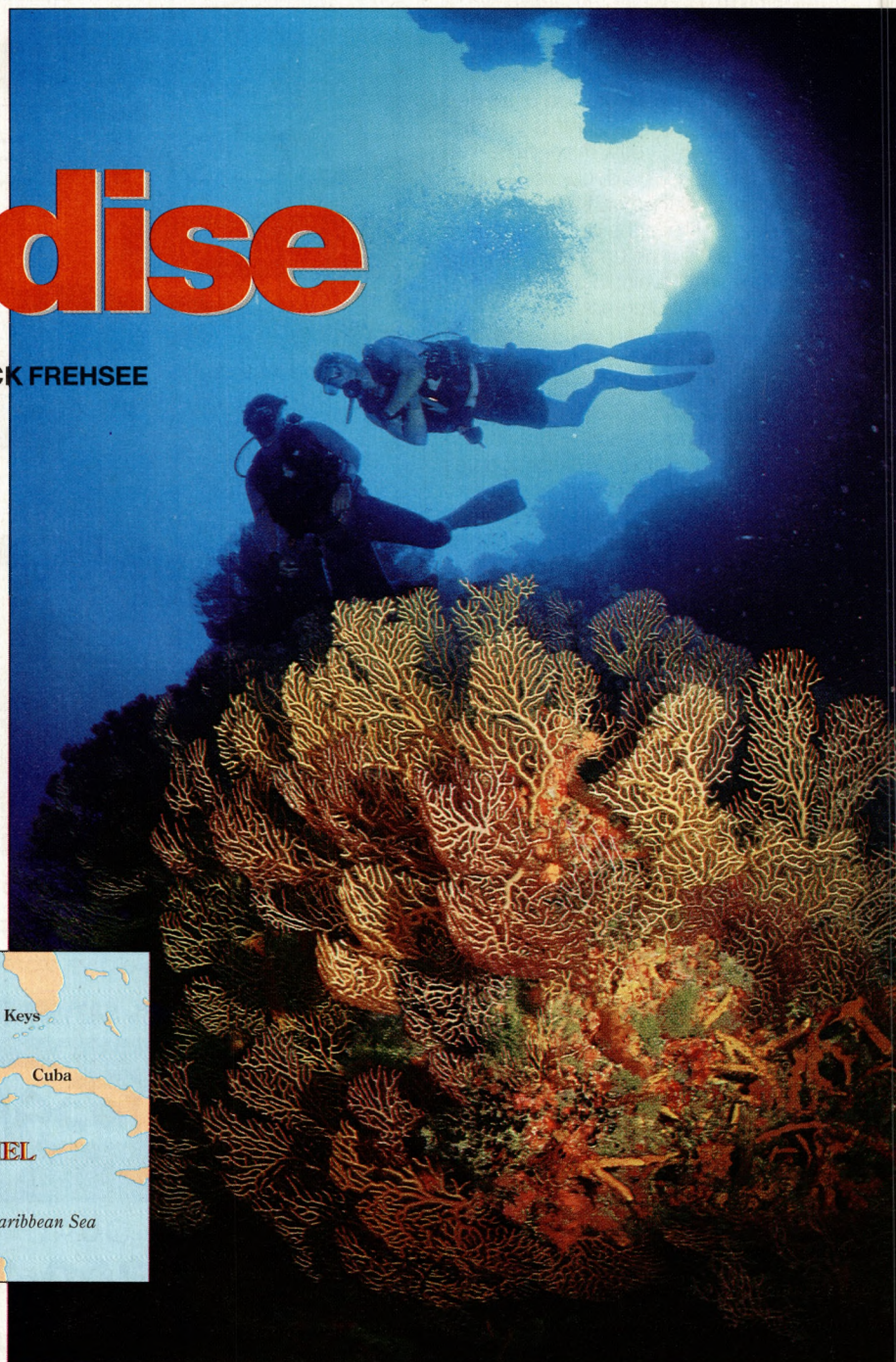
TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE

Cozumel, the friendly, downhome Mexican island with one of the most mountainous clear water reefs in the entire Caribbean, is an increasingly popular choice for dive travel. Combining sport and ambiance with easy access from the U.S. gateways of Houston and Miami, the little 8 by 30 mile island continues to attract thousands of divers every year.

In response to demand, there are more than four dozen dive operators on Cozumel, ranging from one man operations to full size, full service establishments. One of the very best choices for quality and services is the popular and established Dive Paradise.

Dive Paradise is easy to find. In continuous operation for 14 years, the main headquarters is across from the waterfront on the main road at the southern edge of the town of San Miguel. You can't miss the little blue store with the red and white flags and angelfish logo. There is a second store and dock diagonally across the street at the Hotel Barracuda. With a fleet of boats led by a new flagship, the 37 foot *Renegado*, and a staff of nearly 60, Dive Paradise is certainly one of Cozumel's largest dive operations. But more important, it is also one of the island's highest quality, most dependable operators. Dive Paradise combines fun diving and a sense of adventure with an excellent amount of individual choice. One sign of its excellence is the complimentary buoyancy control workshop available on request. Another is the almost unlimited selection of times and types of diving available.

This includes a unique concept called "Cock-a-Doodle" dives. For only \$75, qualified divers can be picked up at 6:00 am for a series of three dives. This outing includes three tanks, weights, snacks and in-water divemaster. Acceptance re-



quires 50 logged dives, a dive computer and 24 hour advance registration. Reservations can be made through a professional dive travel agency or by calling Dive Paradise direct. This program has at least three advantages over standard Cozumel dive offerings: the price is a bargain; you get an early start on the diving day, avoiding crowding on a popular site; and you usually get back to shore by noon. Photographers should especially like this plan.

Cock-a-Doodle dives are just one choice at Dive Paradise. The twilight two tank trip for \$55, leaving at 3:00 pm, takes you to the reefs in time for a day-

Divers hover over a massive aggregation of seafans. Such spectacular sights are commonplace in Cozumel's crystal waters.

light dive. After a surface interval that includes snacks, divers visit a quality Cozumel reef after dark.

E.D.P. (Experienced Diver Program) computer two tank trips are for experienced divers only. For \$59 you visit two of the most popular or special dive sites in Cozumel.

The custom morning two tank fast trip for only \$52 is also very popular. Originators of the six pack (six passenger) fast boat concept in Cozumel, Dive

Paradise provides a 26 to 27 foot out-board for quick trips to two quality sites from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm daily. An even greater bargain is the custom afternoon two tank fast trip for \$45 from 1:00 to 5:00 pm daily. Dive Paradise also offers standard two tank boat trips, standard one tank afternoon trips and one tank night dives.

Dive Paradise is also the island leader in oxygen enriched diving. Linked with the new and professional Nitrox Solutions in Cozumel, a PADI and an IANTD certified training facility, Dive Paradise can arrange for a full range of services, from instruction to nitrox fills in popular and custom mixes. Nearly all Dive Paradise staff members are nitrox certified.

The fleet of boats begins with the new 37 foot *Renegado*, a fiberglass V-hull with a fly bridge and turbo charged diesel engines. This handsome vessel comfortably carries a maximum of 14 divers. The other members of the fleet are: *Calypso*, a 40 foot fiberglass hull with a fly bridge/cabin powered by a single diesel, usually with 10 to 12 divers aboard and 14 maximum; *Tombo*, a 36 foot traditional Cozumel style boat and the only wooden boat in the fleet; *Yucab II* and *Aires*, 44 foot custom dive boats; and *Paradise Diver* and *Sagitario*, 42 foot custom dive boats. Six passenger boats in the 26 to 27 foot class include *Lupita*, *Queen Angel*, *Ana Luz* and *John-y*.

Dive Paradise boats leave the home dock at the Barracuda Hotel according to schedule. They also will pick up divers with reservations at all popular southern hotel docks. All vessels have marine radios and full safety equipment, including DAN oxygen units.

Owner, manager and the driving force behind Dive Paradise is the indefatigable Renee Applegate. Apple, as she is called by everyone, is the coordinator and organizer for the entire boat fleet and Dive Paradise's menu of services. She is a master scuba instructor with 30 years of experience in California, the Red Sea and, of course, Cozumel. The Dive Paradise instructional team is led by Jose "Pico" Castello—a marine biologist and master scuba instructor with more than 35 years of experience in Mexico—and Daniel Ayala—a PADI assistant instructor and Dive Paradise's dock-master. Other key staff members include reservationists Lucia (Lucy) Rivera and Lucila (Lucy) Che Velasquez and dive-masters Nestor Sansores, German Mercado and Buena Ventura Nah. All have been with Dive Paradise from 5 to 14 years.



Above: Dive Paradise's *Paradise Diver* departs for another exciting Cozumel undersea adventure. Left: Smiles all around enhance the friendly service of Dive Paradise's professional staff.

Cozumel's Friendly, Downhome Dive Operation



Above: A school of grunts takes refuge from the strong current that sweeps over Tormentos Reef. Left: The colorful facade of Dive Paradise's main shop.

The main shop on the coastal road is reservations headquarters and the primary retail center. The store keeps both U.S. and traditional Cozumel hours, opening at 7:00 am and closing at 9:00 pm. Dive Paradise is Cozumel's newest PADI Five Star facility, a NAUI facility and

an SSI and NASDS training facility.

Popular dive sites regularly visited by Dive Paradise include **Santa Rosa Reef**, an especially colorful row of pinnacles and adjacent wall; **Tormentos**, a series of mid-depth striated reefs loaded

(Continued from Page 111)

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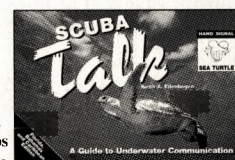
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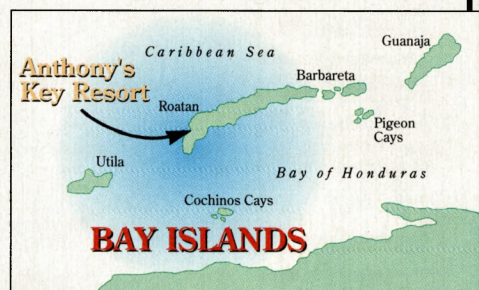
Sunrise is remarkable, rising over the mountains and treeline to bathe the island in a warm glow. Sunset is unforgettable, creating an orange sky and palm silhouette.

Anthony's Key Resort may be as close as you can get to nature and still be comfortable. Perched on the edge of an emerald lagoon, ostensibly the most beautiful setting on the pretty, tropical island of Roatan, the largest of the Bay Islands of Honduras, it is an enduring panorama of sea and sky. The little stilt house bungalows barely intrude upon the beach, rocky shoreline and two coconut crowded sandy islets, including Anthony's Key, the resort's namesake. Just offshore, within easy snorkeling distance, lies the nearly 30 mile long north shore fringing reef, the southernmost extension of Mexico and Central America's Great Maya Reef. A 2 to 30 minute boat ride from the resort's dock reaches more than 30 terrific dive sites, marked with permanent moorings. Much of the reef, from AKR to the western tip of the island, is within the Sandy Bay Marine Reserve, protecting this special seascape now and in the future.

Popular sites include **Pillar Coral**, with one of the largest stands of that coral (rare in much of the Caribbean), **Peter's Place**, a fish-lined drop-off, and **West End**, one of the richest walls in the Bay Islands.

AKR has been a dedicated dive resort for 27 years, coupling an excellent environment with a nature blended tourist village of native woods and architecture. Owned and managed by the Galindo family of Roatan, AKR by itself is a standout vacation haven above and below the sea.

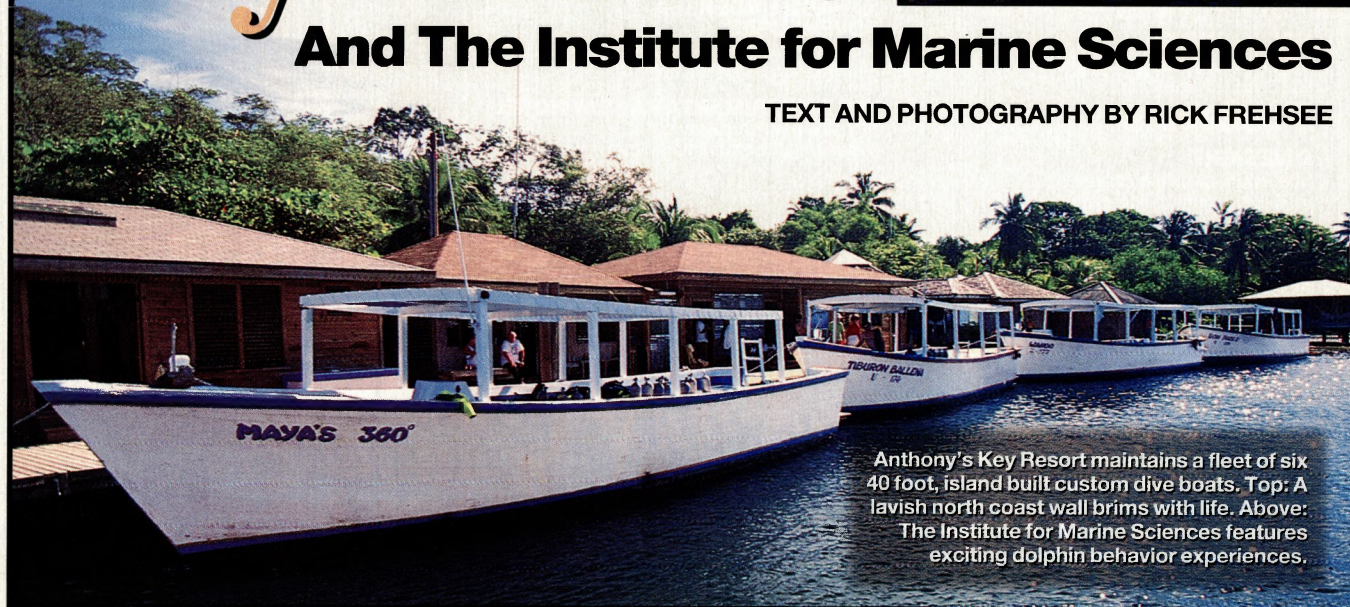
But there is more. Adjacent to the resort, on the eastern end of the property and on Little Bailey's Key at the outer edge of the lagoon, is the pleasant and professional Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences, a multi-faceted recreational and research complex. While the resort facility concentrates on morning, afternoon and evening reef dives aboard six, 40 foot island built custom boats, RIMS presents a complete dolphin program, including scuba and snorkel dives and dolphin demonstrations, marine mammal research and education, and coral reef



Anthony's Key Resort

And The Institute for Marine Sciences

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK FREHSEE



Anthony's Key Resort maintains a fleet of six 40 foot, island built custom dive boats. Top: A lavish north coast wall brims with life. Above: The Institute for Marine Sciences features exciting dolphin behavior experiences.

monitoring, research and education programs. RIMS is a bona fide research institute recognized by Honduras and regularly visited by many leading U.S. colleges and universities.

Guesthouses at Anthony's Key are a series of simple but attractive wooden bungalows on Roatan and Anthony's Key. They are mounted on stilts and arranged as singles, doubles or triples, nestled in greenery on a hillside or at the edge of the sea. Each has access to a porch that provides an individual look at the resort's breathtaking tropical scenery. The interiors are cooled by tropical breezes and an overhead fan.

The restaurant, bar, offices, reception and social areas and observation deck are hillside. Three tasty and ample meals are served there daily. The rest of the resort includes the docks with boutique, snack bar, snack shop, dive operation, photo



TACA has modern 767 and 737 aircraft and offers convenient schedules to San Pedro Sula and Roatan from major U.S. gateways.

shop and hyperbaric chamber complex. AKR maintains a stable and horseback riding is a popular secondary activity.

Most of the resort staff comes from the little village of Sandy Bay, which unobtrusively borders both sides of the resort. Many of the very friendly staff members have been with AKR 10 years or more. AKR has about 80 fulltime employees; RIMS has a fulltime staff of 18, including a marine biologist, marine mammal experts and dolphin trainers. The Anthony's Key dive operation is preparing and educating personnel to further expand the diving instruction. The intent is to be able to run IDC courses and become a PADI Five Star facility.

The Dolphin Snorkel Program, offered several times daily six days a week, provides a snorkeling session for small groups in an enclosure at Bailey's Key Beach. This provides a close experience with natural dolphin behavior in a shallow lagoon setting. The Dolphin Dive Program provides an incredible opportunity for divers to observe and interact with dolphins in the open sea. For about 40 minutes, one-half dozen divers are escorted to a nearby reef site to observe a pair of dolphins. Both programs are very popular and AKR guests are given priority for reservations. Photo Roatan, AKR's professional video/photo facility, provides a video shoot for each Dolphin Snorkel/Dive, producing a video documentary for purchase. Photo Roatan also

provides general video/photo services.

The Roatan Institute for Marine Sciences offers a popular Dolphin Discovery Camp each summer. This is an effective and affecting educational/recreational program for youngsters. Families with children should plan early if kids are to participate in the 1997 Dolphin Camp (June through August).

RIMS has initiated a coral reef monitoring project within and adjacent to the Sandy Bay Marine Reserve. The long term study, relying in part on a series of six temperature monitors that have been placed at depths ranging from 20 to 100

feet on the north shore wall, will measure and record water temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, etc. RIMS will also monitor species count, diversity, relative abundance and seasonal population fluctuations. This study will contribute greatly to our knowledge of site specific and general coral reef health. Educational groups visiting and conducting experiments and monitoring studies at RIMS this summer included Yale University, Rhodes College, University of North Carolina-Wilmington, University of Louisville and Agnes Scott College.

(Continued on Page 110)

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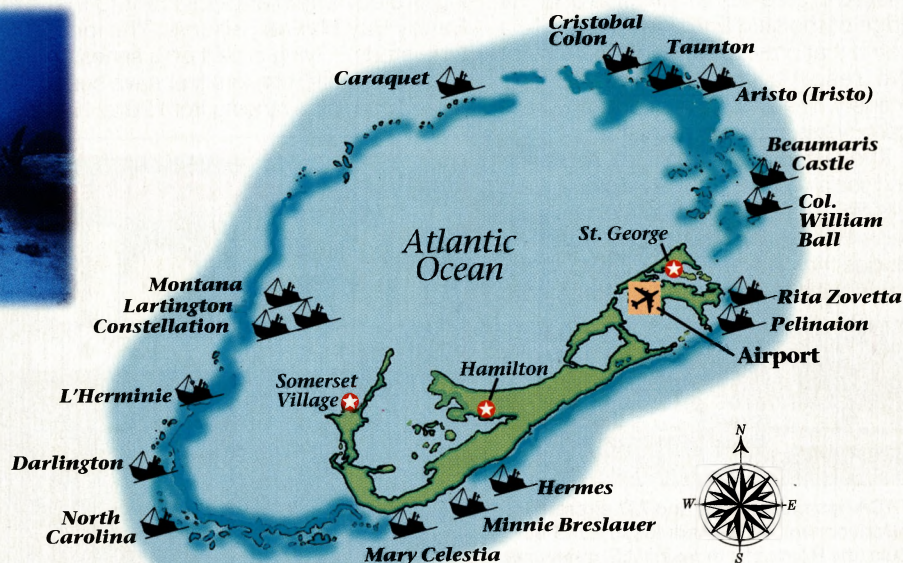


Like most tropical islands, Bermuda offers a fabulous array of living coral reefs, mini drop-offs, coral caverns and friendly reef fish. Reef sites such as Tarpon Hole, Eastern Blue Cut, Deep Mooring and Southwest Breaker invite exploration.

It is truly a paradise for snorkelers and scuba divers alike. Yet, Bermuda is special—it offers divers more than just another pretty coral reef.

For almost 500 years, ships have accidentally collided with this Atlantic island outpost, resulting in the world's greatest undersea treasure of nautical history. Mile for mile, Bermuda offers the greatest number of diveable shipwrecks in the Western Hemisphere.

Bermuda's wreck collection spans five centuries of shipping and includes: a transatlantic luxury liner, numerous steel hulled freighters, a luxury motor yacht,



two Civil War paddlewheel blockade runners, a 19th century French warship, a Royal Mail Steam packet, two, four-masted schooners, several 18th century British warships, several 16th century Spanish treasure galleons, plus British, French, Dutch and Portuguese sailing vessels of all kinds. At some sites, shipwrecks are almost piled one on top of another, allowing divers to explore multiple wrecks on the same dive.

Bermuda is an aquatic museum without walls and history comes alive as you swim among these marvelous treasures.

HERE IS A SAMPLING OF OUR MANY WRECK DIVING SITES

ARISTO (IRISTO)

A 250 foot Norwegian freighter, which sank in 1937. She lies in 50 feet of water with her engine, boilers, propeller and a fire engine still visible.

CARAQUET

A 200 foot British Royal Mail Steam packet that sank in 1923. She lies in 40 feet of water with enormous steam boilers, a great anchor and winches still in place.

CONSTELLATION

A 192 foot American schooner loaded with general cargo, sunk in 1943. Lying at 30 feet is a mound of cement sacks, dishes, bottles, glassware and supplies.

CRISTOBAL COLON

Bermuda's largest shipwreck is the 499 foot Spanish transatlantic luxury liner that sank in 1936. She lies in 55 feet of water with her six boilers still visible.

DARLINGTON

A 285 foot iron hull sail/steamer that sank in 1886. She lies in 30 feet of water with her steam boilers, propeller shaft and deck winches still visible.

HERMES

A 165 foot steel hull Buoy Tender, she was sunk as an artificial reef. Fully intact, she sits upright on the sand at 80 feet with mast, wheelhouse and deck winch.

LARTINGTON

A 245 foot early vintage steel freighter with a cargo of cotton, sunk in 1879. She lies in 30 feet of water with boilers, stern section and propeller still visible.

L'HERMINIE

A French 60-gun Man-of-War that sank in 1838. Resting in 35 feet of water, this warship's 9 foot long cannons are still onboard.

MARY CELESTIA

A 225 foot side paddlewheel steamer, she served as a Confederate blockade runner. In 55 feet of water, her remains include paddlewheels and anchor.

MINNIE BRESLAUER

A 300 foot steel hulled freighter, sunk on her maiden voyage in 1873. Still visible are the ship's propeller, steam boilers and wheelhouse.

MONTANA (NOLA)

A 236 foot side paddlewheel steamer, sunk in 1863 while running the Civil War blockade. She lies in 30 feet with boilers and paddlewheels intact.

NORTH CAROLINA

A classic sunken sailing ship, this 205 foot English iron hull bark sank in 1880 and still has her bow sprit, sail rigging and deadeyes in place.

PELINAION

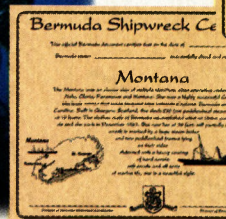
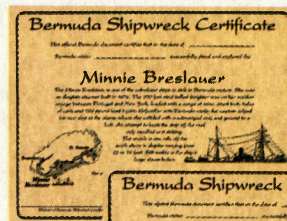
A 385 foot Greek cargo steamer, sunk in 1940 after breaking her back on a reef. Lying at 55 feet, her giant boiler and engine are an awesome sight.

RITA ZOVELLO

A 400 foot Italian cargo steamer, sunk in 1924. At 65 feet you can swim through her drive shaft tunnel, examine her propeller and explore her innards.

TAUNTON

A 228 foot Norwegian steamer that stranded on North East Breakers in 1920. Sitting at 20 to 30 feet, she is a great shallow dive and a beautiful wreck.



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The Bermuda dive operators, in cooperation with the Bermuda Department of Tourism, are offering—absolutely free—a set of six beautifully designed certificates printed on parchment like paper and suitable for framing. Each certificate documents your dive on one

of six of Bermuda's most popular wreck dives and provides a brief history of the wreck.

The 1996 series of Bermuda Shipwreck Certificates include the *Constellation*, *Cristobal Colon*, *Hermes*, *Mary Celestia*, *Minnie Breslau* and the *Pelinaion*.

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1. Come to Bermuda this fall or winter.
2. Stay at any hotel or cottage of your choice.
3. Dive with any of Bermuda's five dive operators.
4. Dive any of the six designated Shipwreck Certificate wreck sites.
5. You will be awarded a signed Bermuda Shipwreck Certificate documenting your dive.

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(441) 234-3561 (fax)

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Hamilton Princess Hotel
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Hamilton HM AX, Bermuda
(441) 295-9485
or
Southampton Princess
(441) 238-2332
(441) 234-5180 (fax)

Scuba Look
Grotto Bay Beach Hotel
P.O. Box WK 658
Warwick WK BX, Bermuda
(441) 293-7319
(441) 295-2421 (fax)

Fantasea Diving
Darrell's Wharf
1 Harbour Road
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(441) 236-6339
(441) 236-8926 (fax)
Toll free: 1-888-DO A DIVE
www.bermuda.com/Scuba



**Bermuda Department
of Tourism**
(800) 821-1199

South Side Scuba, Ltd.
Sonesta Beach Resort
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(441) 238-1833
(441) 236-0394 (fax)

BERMUDA SHIPWRECKS

The *Mary Celestia* was a swift little side paddlewheeler designed specifically to elude the Union blockade of Confederate sea ports in the South. She was a ship cloaked in mystery and intrigue—a ship of multiple identities. She made her runs under numerous aliases, including *Mary Celeste*, *Marie Celeste*, *Mary Celestia* and *Bijou*—all in an effort to evade the attention of Union spies

had paid the pilot to deliberately sink the vessel. The entire story of this elusive blockade runner can be found at Bermuda's Maritime Museum.

The wreck of this paddlewheeler lies one-half mile off Bermuda's south shore and is visited by nearly all of the island's dive operators. She lies in an upright position in a natural sand hole surrounded by coral reef and rock formations. Depth to the sand bottom is 56 feet and much of the vessel's hull is buried under the sand.

rifles. At certain times of the year, just after a storm or hurricane, much of the sand is swept away—revealing the entire outline of the ship's hull and perhaps some clue to the whereabouts of her missing cargo.

The best time to dive Bermuda's shipwrecks and coral reefs is during the fall—September, October and November. The water is still warm (71 to 81°F) and the visibility, exceptional. This is also the off-season for Bermuda hotels and room rates are considerably reduced. 🐠

The *Mary Celestia*

Bermuda's Elusive Blockade Runner from the American Civil War

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERI MURPHY

who were tracking shipping activities.

She was a privately owned vessel, built in England and chartered to the Confederacy for the delivery of medical supplies, food, arms and ammunition. Built during the American Civil War, she was 225 feet in length, equipped with two funnels and two masts. Her paddlewheels were state of the art design—hinged and controlled by tie rods that rotated each paddle as it propelled the vessel.

On September 6, 1864, the *Mary Celeste* left port in Bermuda, bound for Wilmington, North Carolina, with a cargo of rifles, ammunition, bacon and other merchandise. She cleared the channel and was cruising along the south shore at 13 knots. Under the guidance of harbor pilot John Virgin, she edged closer to shore to disembark the ship's owner and the pilot. Although visibility was excellent, the blockade runner struck a reef and sank within eight minutes. A subsequent investigation charged that Federal spies

The largest piece of wreckage is a huge iron boiler and fire box almost 20 feet high and 25 feet in length. At the bottom of the boiler are four fire doors through which the crew once shoveled coal. Just aft of the boiler is the ship's engine and beyond that are bits and pieces of the hull and stern.

Yet, the strangest aspect of this wreck is a structure that resembles a miniature Ferris wheel standing upright in the sand. It is actually the metal frame of the ship's starboard paddlewheel—fixed in an upright position and still attached to its drive shaft. Not far away, on the port side of the hull, is the other paddlewheel lying flat on the sand bottom. This is the only wreck I have ever seen with an upright paddlewheel.

Other points of interest include a piece of the bow lying on its port side and an anchor way off in the sand on the starboard side. While divers have discovered all sorts of artifacts on this vessel, such as pewter mugs, no one has ever seen any



BERMUDA DIVE OPERATORS

The *Mary Celestia* is just one of dozens of shipwrecks awaiting exploration. If you are interested in visiting Bermuda and diving its wrecks, contact any one of Bermuda's dive operators:

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1 Harbour Road
Paget PG 01, Bermuda
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P.O. Box WK 658
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SECRET SEA BY TAMARA COLLINS

Photojournalists Burt Jones and Maurine Shimlock invite readers to peruse the result of a personal and professional odyssey that brought them to the far reaches of the world in search of awe inspiring images and untold tales held with the boundless sea. Inspirational, informative and enlightening, the text and images set within the pages of *Secret Sea* blend flawlessly in a celebration of the intricate relationships of the ocean's inhabitants.

Superior construction, an aesthetically pleasing design and 164 pages of thick,



luxurious paper create the ideal showcase for 159 full color, breathtaking photographs. Each photo resonates with an incredible variety of life and environment in the exotic aquatic worlds of the Solomon Islands, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and more.

You may have already explored the sea on scuba or snorkel but you probably haven't seen the hidden wonders frozen for our enjoyment by Jones and Shimlock. Their cameras and text shed light on the seas' wide angle vistas, hidden corners and secret minutia that we may skim over in the haste of a dive. Have you ever seen an eviscerating corallimorpharian, the abstract, swirling colors of an anemone mouth or the swirling spiral of a crinoid arm? In the *Secret Sea* sharks cruise the limitless blue, fish peer from photos with a comical caricature of a human face, turtles mate and cleaner wrasse work diligently in the open mouth of a Coral Trout. The macro lens takes us into the worlds within worlds, such as a soft coral colony that harbors myriad creatures too tiny for the naked eye. Supporting the eloquent prose that describes Jones and Shimlock's journey are photo captions with a brief description, identification or vignette that illustrates the scene and weaves the photographs into a tale of the behavior and interdependence of the creatures of the sea.

Secret Sea, a 12 by 12 inch hard cover book, is available for \$85 through Fourth Day Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 6768, 4067 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78209; (210) 824-8099, fax (210) 820-3522.

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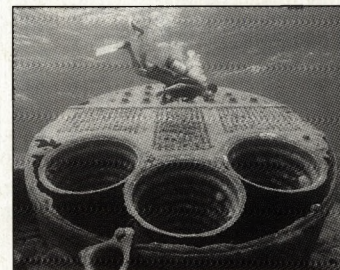
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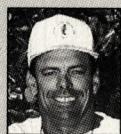
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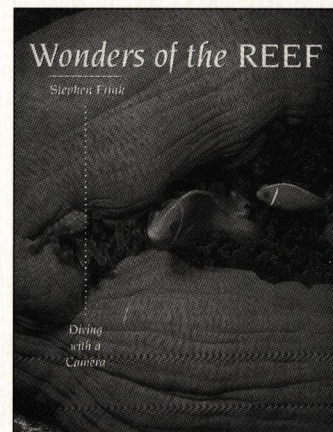
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WONDERS OF THE REEF: DIVING WITH THE CAMERA

BY TY SAWYER

Stephen Frink, a leading expert in underwater photography, reveals his secrets and practical techniques for capturing the stunning beauty of under-sea life in his new book, *Wonders of the Reef: Diving With a Camera*. Using exquisite color photographs from fascinating sites around the world, Frink discusses the advantages and disadvantages of a wide variety of equipment under myriad conditions, the best locations



for capturing exciting sea life and colorful flora, and the most appropriate gear to bring along.

The easygoing and highly readable text not only enhances the magnificent photographs but enables the reader to thoroughly understand the capabilities of the equipment.

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Wonders of the Reef: Diving With a Camera, by Stephen Frink, 160 pages with 125 full color illustrations, 8½ by 11½ hardcover. Available for \$39.95 plus \$6 shipping and handling from Water-House. For more information, call (800) 272-9122, fax (305) 451-5147.

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(Continued from Page 105)

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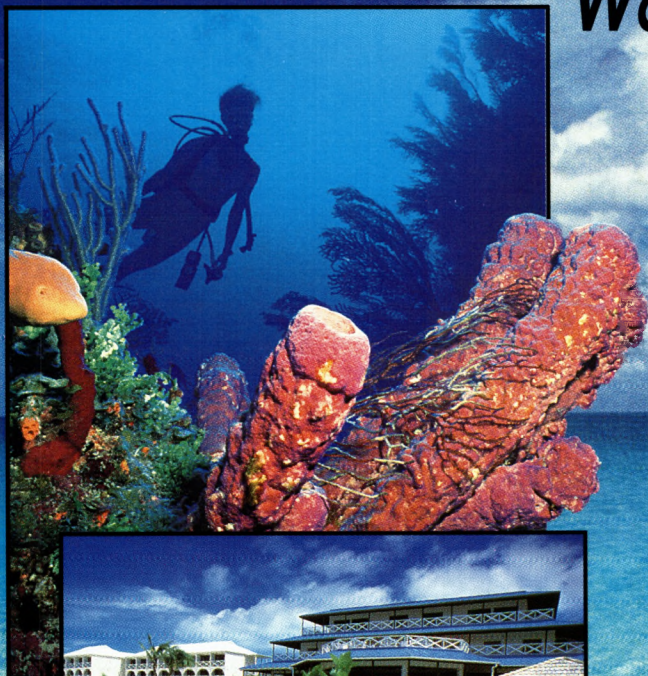
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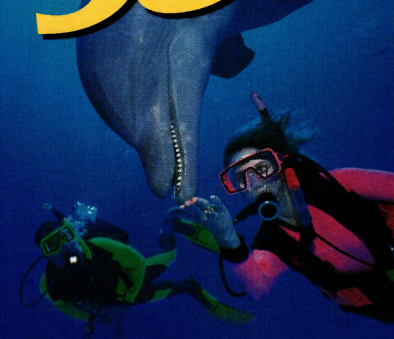
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DIVE PARADISE

(Continued from Page 101)

with marine life; and famous **Palancar Reef**, actually a number of sites along a mammoth canyon and wall. The dive procedure in Cozumel is drift diving with the group riding along in the current.

Dive Paradise offers an array of dive packages with several hotels: the Barracuda, offering economy and comfortable accommodations; the Plaza Las Glorias, a five star oceanfront property; and the Fiesta Inn, a spacious, four star hotel. All are just south of San Miguel. A little farther south and closer to the popular reefs is the Fiesta Americana



Mexicana Airlines offers convenient flights to Cozumel from several U.S. gateways.

Cozumel Reef, one of Cozumel's finest hotels. Packages with or without airfare can be booked through Tropical Adventures at (800) 247-3483; (206) 441-3483 (WA); e-mail 103520.2014@compuserve.com or Ocean Connection at (800) 568-5332; (713) 996-7800 (TX) or fax (713) 996-1556.

Dive Notes

DIVE KADAVU MATANA RESORT CORRECTION: The August issue of SKIN DIVER included misleading information about Dive Kadavu's dive schedule. Guests may opt for up to four dives each day:

1. Two morning dives.
2. One dive in the morning, one dive in the afternoon and a night dive.
3. Two dives in the morning, one dive in the afternoon and a night dive.
4. Two dives in the morning and a night dive.

We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused. For more information on Dive Kadavu Matana Resort, contact Tropical Adventures Travel at (800) 247-3483; (206) 441-3483 or fax (206) 441-5431. You can e-mail 103520.2014@compuserve.com.

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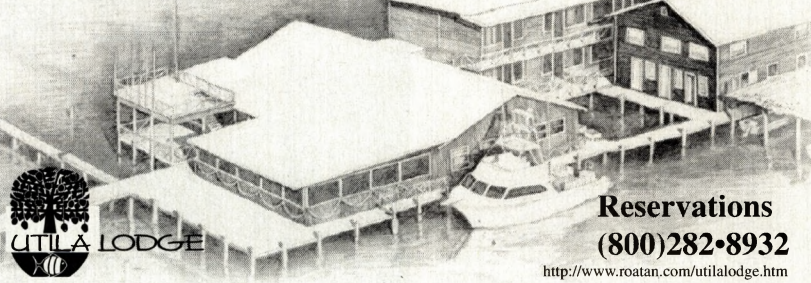
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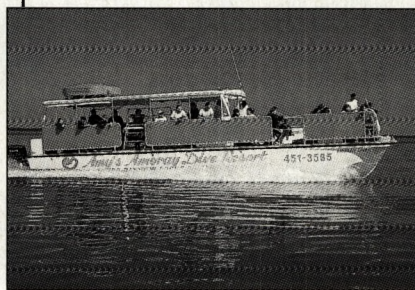


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TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICK FREHSEE

Imagine a narrow, palm-fringed island that stretches across the turquoise Caribbean like a string of pearls. A white sand beach borders the island on its seaward side, disappearing from view in both directions. Offshore a wisp of foam marks the crest of golden reefs, which also run north and south seemingly to infinity. Dive boats, numerous enough for an easy ride to the reefs but never so many they crowd the waters, skim across the lagoon. There is

habitation here; both a little fishing village and a tourist town blend seamlessly. There are hotels, shops, restaurants and more for visitors but the streets are sand and there's nothing taller than a palm tree. In the late afternoons and evenings, the little town comes alive; residents and visitors both enjoy their paradisiacal island exhibiting the respect and friendship that has made Ambergris Caye a model dive/tourist destination.

Ambergris Caye is the largest of Belize's many offshore islands. More than 25 miles long and often less than one-half mile wide; it appears like a string of tiny cayes connected by a white sand beach. Ambergris is actually a caye only by the virtue of the ancient Maya who once inhabited these shores. These sea traders and island hoppers of the past dug a narrow canal at the northern end, separating Ambergris from the southern end of the Yucatan Peninsula. One-half to three-quarters of a mile offshore

is the longest and most species diversified coral reef in the Western Hemisphere—the Great Belize Barrier Reef, part of the Maya or Great Western Barrier Reef that runs from Mexico almost to South America. Ambergris Caye and the Belize Barrier Reef have formed along the seaward edge of a fault line that parallels the country of Belize.

The reef is continuous and only interrupted occasionally by narrow, mostly shallow channels that allow boat access to the outside. The beach runs nearly parallel to the reef for many miles; at Rocky Point it reaches out and actually become part of the reef. Boca Bacalar Chico is the ancient man-made channel that barely separates Ambergris from the Xcalac (Yucatan) Peninsula. This is Belize's offshore border with Mexico.

Ambergris Caye can be divided into three geographical sections from west to east: a leeward area of extensive mangrove marshes, creeks and lagoons; a plateau in the north called Basil Jones; and the cemented sand ridges that comprise most of the island, including the area where San Pedro Town is located.

THE BELIZE BARRIER REEF

According to authorities such as Charles Darwin (1830s) and Jacques-Yves Cousteau (1970s), this is the longest barrier reef and the most spectacular coral environment in the entire Caribbean. Inside the reef are flats, bays and lagoons.

The water is usually shallow (except for some inconspicuous blue holes), with an



Above right: At the northern end of the barrier reef and a few miles east of the Belize mainland, Ambergris Caye's San Pedro Town supports numerous restaurants, hotels and a resident population of 2,500.

Above far right: Front Street, San Pedro's main drag. Right: A day trip to the mainland brings guests to the ancient Maya city of Altun Ha. Far right: Hol Chan Marine Reserve is a pristine site regularly visited by San Pedro's dive operators.

TOP TRIPS FROM AMBERGRIS

LIGHTHOUSE REEF/BLUE HOLE



This one day trip departs early in the morning, with the boat speeding out to the famous Blue Hole at Lighthouse Reef. Guests make three dives during the day and have lunch on an island. Two of the dives will be at Lighthouse Reef (including the Blue Hole); the last dive is usually at the northern part of the Turneffe Island on the way back to Ambergris Caye.

THE MAYA SITE OF ALTUN HA



The trip to Altun Ha takes one day and is part river trip and part mainland touring. Guests leave in the morning and take a river trip to Altun Ha to see the Temple of the Masonry Altars, where the largest single piece of carved jade was found. On the way back to Ambergris, guests usually stop at The Maruba Spa Resort to swim and have lunch.

LIGHTHOUSE REEF, THE BLUE HOLE, HALFMOON CAYE AND TURNEFFE ISLANDS



This is an unhurried overnight trip in which guests dive two of Belize's atolls and visit Halfmoon Caye National Monument. During the trip guests can make six dives, which will include the Blue Hole, Halfmoon Caye Wall, Long Caye Wall, northern Lighthouse and two dives at northern Turneffe. There is an overnight at Halfmoon Caye, allowing guests to explore the island and see the rare red footed boobie birds. Ask about the feeding of Nurse Sharks at Halfmoon Caye during this trip.



AMBERGRIS CAYE

emerald or blue-green tinge. Outside the reef, the water deepens quickly and is a dark cobalt or royal blue. The reef appears as a narrow golden line dividing the shades of blue.

Only at Ambergris Caye do you find the combination of a lengthy, populated island running so close to the barrier reef. Here is a mammoth reef system running solid, mile after mile. The crystal Caribbean Sea provides a clear looking glass for viewing the marvelous marine life of this amazing reef. Location and reef structure come together to make Ambergris Caye "the diving and snorkeling capital of Belize."

ISLAND HISTORY

This first recorded European contact with Ambergris Caye was made by Spanish explorers in 1508.

Prior to that, in pre-hispanic times, Ambergris Caye was the home of dozens of small Maya trade bases that served the important ocean-going canoe trade route from Mexico to Honduras. Remnants and relics of this trade route, such as the small ruins of Marco Gonzalez at the southern end of Ambergris Caye, are testament to the island's ancient civilization.

Shortly after the arrival of Europeans, the original native population succumbed to conquest and disease and abandoned the island. Ambergris, however, did not remain deserted for long. By the start of the 17th century, the island became a haven for Dutch, English and French pirates. Many buccaneer place names around Ambergris—and the occasional gold coin or old bottle washed up on the beach—are the remains of pirate times. Permanent British settlement took place in 1828; Ambergris, as well as much of modern Belize, participated in an early logwood, chicle and mahogany industry.

A major contribution to Ambergris Caye's current population came after 1848 when hundreds of Yucatecan Maya migrated to the island, escaping a caste war. It is the combination of multi-ethnic influences from Belize and past migrations of Mexican-Maya that lends to Ambergris its unique modern flavor.

THE ISLAND TODAY

After a stimulating if fragile period of prosperity as a fishing center, little San Pedro turned to tourism in the mid-1960s. Since that time hotels, restau-



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rants, lounges, gift shops, diving and fishing operations, boats and guides have developed steadily. Today, tourism is the island's economic pillar, however, residents have been very successful in keeping San Pedro an enchanting and charming haven. Most of the rest of the island is nearly uninhabited.

Hotels, while they do not crowd the waterfront, string along San Pedro and the beaches just to the south and north. A variety of accommodations are available, from modern marina hotels and yacht clubs to beautiful island clubs and villas to small, centrally located hotels and guesthouses, on and off the beach. Condominiums, time shares and island houses are popular with small groups and families.

Another fundamental of island culture is food. San Pedranos have inherited from their Maya ancestors dishes that include tortillas, beans, mole, rellenos and tamalitos. A second influence comes from island life itself; seafood, coconut and tropical fruits. Visitors have added a final influence—hot dogs, hamburgers, pizza and ice cream are also readily available. In addition to hotel eateries, independent restaurants are also numerous.

Transportation requirements on Ambergris are minimal—walking is the most popular method of getting around, supplemented by bicycle and golf cart rentals. Boat rides are available for longer sojourns or for hotels outside town.

GETTING THERE

Belize, with its many mainland and off-shore assets, is a popular ecotouristic destination. TACA serves Belize International Airport with modern Boeing jets direct from Miami, New Orleans and Houston, with immediate connections



from Los Angeles and San Francisco. Fifteen minute flights on intracountry airlines (mostly twin prop aircraft), service San Pedro/Ambergris from both the Belize International and the Belize Municipal every hour of daylight. Proof of citizenship is necessary to enter Belize, a \$15 (U.S.) departure tax is payable when you leave. (\$1 U.S. equals \$2 Belize—both dollars are accepted most anywhere in Belize.)

DIVE OPERATORS

A range of diving services is available from nearly every hotel and from independent operators centered in or near downtown San Pedro. Services include dedicated dive resorts, hotels with dedicated dive operations, independent full service operations and qualified inde-

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AMBERGRIS CAYE

pendent boat operators and guides. Several high quality day boats and live-aboards are also available. Many operators are full service facilities offering trips, tours, packages, retail, rental and a variety of instruction. A professional photo/video service is available in town and at selected resorts. A typical Ambergris dive operator is on or near one of the many finger docks that extend from Ambergris beaches. It will have a shop, wet storage, boat docking and launching available. Ambergris Caye dive boats are assorted in length and design; a 26 to 28 foot twin outboard custom vessel is the standard generally available. Dive trips include morning and afternoon one and two tank dives, night dives, all day picnic dives or overnight trips (Ambergris, Caye Caulker, the Turneffe Islands or Lighthouse Reef).

ISLAND DIVE ENVIRONMENT

Coral reefs of gold and green break the surface of the shallows while immense, yawning canyons plunge toward the abyss. This is the broad and diverse underwater environment available to visitors of Ambergris Caye. Popular dive sites include two categories: biologically profuse reefs and sea gardens in the shallows; mountainous reefs scalloped by both wide canyons and narrow fissures in the deep. Special dive sites include marine life focus locations, shipwrecks and entrance caverns to blue holes. All day or overnight trips to northern Ambergris, the southern barrier reef, the Turneffe Island and Lighthouse Reef Atolls access a variety of world-class dive sites.

Ambergris Caye's most famous dive site, for good reason, is the shallows and mid-water depths within the **Hol Chan Marine Reserve**. This reserve, although focusing on the coral reef, also includes important seagrass and mangrove nurseries closeby, thus ensuring the general health of the reserve. The walls of the reef channel are lined with stands of golden Elkhorn Coral and immense mounds and pinnacles of star, starlet and brain coral. It is the rich and diverse marine life living in the cut, which includes beautiful angelfish, inquisitive groupers and friendly Green Moray Eels, that is the attraction. Hol Chan is a popular day or night dive or snorkel site.

A short distance south of Hol Chan is a shallow sand and reef flat area known as **Shark-Ray Alley**. Here is a unique assemblage of Nurse Sharks and Southern Stingrays that often mix and mingle with



divers and snorkelers. The medium-sized sharks and rays buzz the bottom and move in and out in circles or figure eights among the amazed visitors.

Closeby is a new Ambergris dive site, the wreck of the **Amigos** in 60 to 70 feet of water. Sunk recently by Ambergris dive operators as a dive attraction, the shipwreck, a 70 foot island freighter, is complemented by a series of underwater canyons nearby.

Another spectacular shallow coral garden is **Mexico Rocks**. This site, a short distance north of San Pedro, includes a vast area of shallow coral heads decorated by sea fans and soft corals. Closeby is the **Cave of Xibalba**, a blue hole with clouds of fish guarding the entrance. Several small shipwrecks are also found in the same area.

Experienced divers will enjoy the outer reefs, pinnacles and walls associated with the ocean side of the barrier reef. Here, at sites such as **M and M Caverns**, **Mata Canyons**, **Palmero Canyon** and **Punta Azul Canyons**, are unbelievably huge coral formations pene-

trated by a complex of caves, caverns, canyons, fissures and overhangs. Often, on the outer barrier reef, divers swim inside as well as outside these mammoth undersea mountains.

ADDITIONAL THINGS TO DO

Visitors to Ambergris Caye will never run out of things to see or do. There is a better selection of underwater and topside adventures, diversions and discoveries than is available perhaps at any other Caribbean dive destination. Divers can select from not only 40 named dive sites at or near Ambergris but also a great variety of all day and overnight trips to north Ambergris/Xcalac Peninsula, Caye Caulker, the Turneffe Islands and Lighthouse Reef. Off-diving hours around San Pedro are easily absorbed at local lounges and eateries. There are numerous gift shops and boutiques in and around San Pedro and at the hotels that feature both T-shirts and standard beach fare as well as high quality arts and crafts. In addition to sculptures, ceramics and artwork from Mexico and Central America, there

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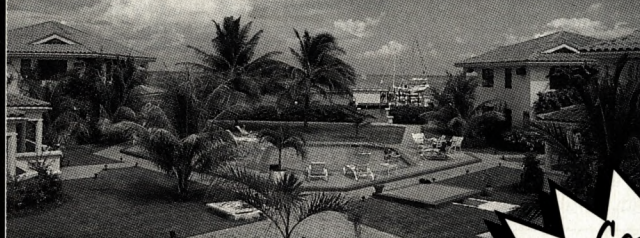
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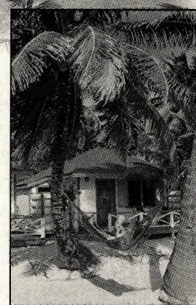
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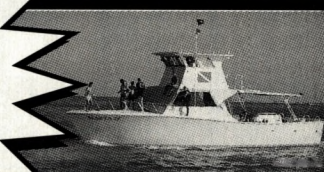
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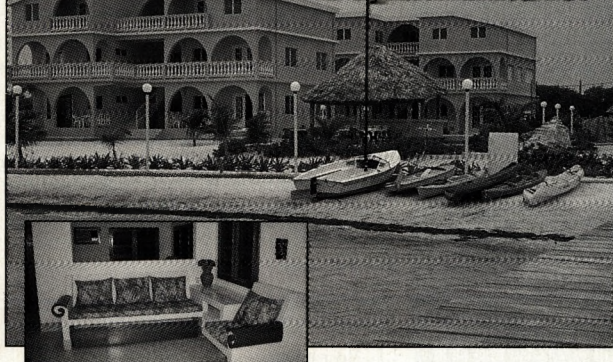
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AMBERGRIS CAYE

are several Belize and Ambergris artists who have galleries in San Pedro. Really impressive artistic mementos are available, including original oil and watercolor paintings in the popular island/primitive style and lifemasks from the colorful Garifuna (Black Carib) population.

Dive, fishing and discovery tours launched from Ambergris are considerable and include a variety of private island picnics, Manatee watches, blue hole expeditions and mangrove snorkel tours. A popular weekly offering—launched from San Pedro—is the Altun-ha river trip. This provides a small group boat outing that enters a river from a mangrove lagoon. After spotting birds and butterflies along the way, guests land and a van takes them to the ancient Maya site of Altun-ha. Here, among the temple ruins, the largest carved jade figurine was found. Many other outings, involving either natural and cultural sites on the mainland, can be arranged from Ambergris Caye. Short flights from San Pedro, combined with a van tour, can access many sites in a sin-

gle day. Popular tours include the Maya sites of Lamanai-Caracol, Altun-ha and Xunantunich in Belize and Tikal in Guatemala. Caracol and Tikal were two of the largest and most spectacular cities in the ancient Maya world.

All day or overnight dive trips to Lighthouse Reef Atoll access one of the greatest dive environments in the under-sea world. Lighthouse Reef, a unique and true coral atoll more than 12 miles long and from 4 to 7 miles wide, is a universe all its own. Here, at deep sites such as **Silver Caves** and **Halfmoon Caye Wall**, divers will find a fantasy world of shape and color. At the **Great Belize Blue Hole**, almost in the center of Lighthouse Reef, is a world as strange as a forbidden planet. At a depth of 110 to 130 feet, divers will hang suspended beneath the lip of the cavern wall, dwarfed by stalactites more than 30 feet long.

With all the varied activities, there will be one common chain that links each Ambergris Caye experience to another: the friendliness and good humor of the island's inhabitants. Here, among numerous conversations, will come the easy friendships that are the hallmark of lovely Ambergris Caye. The warmth and clarity of the waters of this island masterpiece are matched by the warmth of human encounters. This and many discoveries will ensure an early return visit.

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AMBERGRIS CAVE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January

Annual New Year's Eve Bash at Lion's Den, Big Daddy's Discotheque, Tackle Box Bar, Purple Parrot Bar and Tarzan's Discotheque.

February

San Pedro Carnival—Slowly evolving from slapstick fun using powder, flour, lipstick and paint to tease people, to a more traditional Mestizo carnival made up of competing *comparsas* (special dances).

March

Baron Bliss Day—Celebrations held nationwide to honor this great benefactor of Belize. Because of his love for the sea, a harbor regatta is held in front of the lighthouse where he was buried. Horse and cycle races are also held.

April

Good Friday—Special Catholic Church services. Beginning at 3:00 pm, most villagers participate in a procession carrying the cross through town.

May

Dia de las Madres (Mother's Day) is celebrated with a religious ceremony in the evening followed by a gala dinner at Central Park with cultural presentations.

June

Feast Day of St. Peter—San Pedro. Honoring St. Peter, the patron saint of San Pedro. Early morning boat parade. Boats and fishermen are blessed, a special mass is held and a fiesta/jump-up follows.

August

International Sea and Air Festival—San Pedro. A festival of music, dance and foods from Belize, Mexico and the Central American countries.

September

Independence Day—Numerous cultural, religious and sporting activities a couple of weeks before St. George's Caye Day. St. George's Caye Day—Celebrates and commemorates a battle in 1798 when the Spanish were defeated by slaves, Baymen and British soldiers. Around the country similar official ceremonies and parades take place. Caribbean-style carnivals, sporting activities, fire engine parade and pop concerts are held several days prior to this event.

October

Columbus Day (Pan American Day)—Regatta racing in Belize City.

November

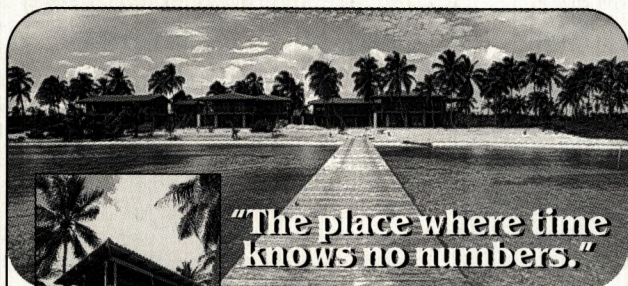
Garifuna Settlement Day—Festival, mainly in the southernmost areas of the country, to mark the first arrival of the Garifuna in 1832 in Dangriga.

December

Boxing Day—Parties, dance, horse races and some Garifuna dances are performed.

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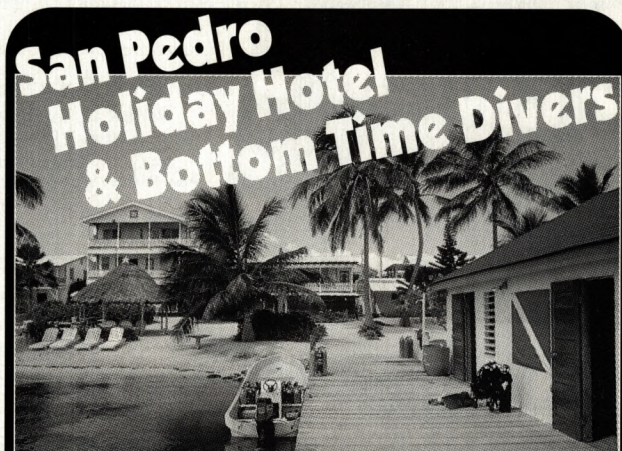
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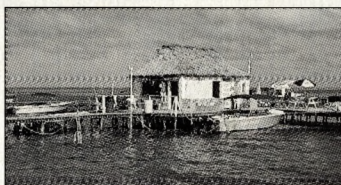
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GRAND CAYMAN'S EAST END

(Continued from Page 39)

deep chasms, swim-throughs and caves in the 50 foot range, the most stunning are found off East End. One site that captured my fancy is **Snapper Hole**, a series of deep ravines 25 to 30 feet deep, interconnected by several tunnels that run through the reef's bottom level, forming a comprehensive maze. Besides the large Cubera Snappers, which can weigh up to 45 pounds, there is a sizable school of Tarpon. Measuring three to four feet, their bright, reflective bodies look like silvery apparitions gliding among the shadows of these ancient limestone alleyways. Outside the mouth of one of the tunnels is a huge, seven foot high anchor dating back to 1892, standing upright

INFORMATION

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and held steadfast to a large coral head.

Geographically identical to Snapper Hole are several additional sites scattered around East End. Some of the more notable, also featuring schools of Tarpon, include **Chub Hole**, **Cinderella's Castle**, **Grouper Grotto**, **Catacombs** and **Ironshore Caves**. From July through October, large parts of the cave systems become chock-full of Silversides. When this takes place, the Tarpon gorge themselves, engulfing mouthfuls of the tiny fish as they punch through their ranks.

The region's year-round sea conditions are not what most believe them to be. In actuality, the average wave height is two to three feet; sometimes less for weeks on end. Even when the seas are less than favorable, as they can become during a winter coldfront, rarely is a day lost to bad weather. This is largely owing to East End's massive, bow-shaped barrier reef. This creates a broad, protected body of water that begins at Old Man Bay

on the Northside, wraps its way south through Collier and Gun Bay and ends at Frank Sound.

Inside the reef's protected barrier, the lagoon features a long stretch of sandy shallows (six to seven feet maximum) with a wealth of Turtle Grass and coral communities. Among this area's list of critters, snorkelers routinely encounter large Southern Stingrays and Eagle Rays foraging the sandy shallows. By night, the lagoon is great for octopus and Reef Squid sightings.

RESORTS AND DIVE SERVICES

Eight years ago, the choice of resorts and dive services on East End was limited to one lone operation. But, the "times they are a changing," with the choice of operations now at three. Each offers its own style of services and advantages.

Following Frank Sound Road west, the first along the way is the Cayman Diving Lodge, East End's oldest dive establish-

HOW TO GET THERE

Several major airlines provide direct, nonstop jet service to Grand Cayman. The island lies 480 miles south of Miami and flight time from this gateway city is seldom more than 70 minutes. Heading the list of airline services is the island's official flag carrier,



Cayman Airways, offering several direct flights from Miami, Houston, Tampa, Atlanta and Orlando.

ment—owned by divers, run by divers for divers. While it may not be big, the lodge has a total of 14 rooms and is a real divers' hotel. At the water's edge are the on-site diving facility, dock, boats, tanks, compressor, rental equipment and gear storage. Departing the pier around 9:00 am for a two tank trip, the first dive is customarily a guided, multi-level wall dive to 100 feet. The second dive is typically unguided, at one of the mid-reef cavern sites. The boat fleet is comprised of two, custom built, 45 foot Garcias, complete with large camera tables, rinse tank and freshwater shower.

While the Cayman Diving Lodge might be considered informal (no pool or tennis courts; no TVs in the rooms), the accommodations are clean, spacious and air-conditioned. Meals are served at the outdoor dining area overlooking the water; thus capitalizing on the cooling effect of gentle sea breezes. Because it is a relatively small operation, the staff members, in addition to being certified divemasters

or instructors, wear a wide assortment of hats, ranging from cook to bottle washer to room service.

The East End's newest dive operation is Ocean Frontiers, a full service facility. It features Scubapro equipment in both a retail and rental department, booking services, dive boat and courtesy van.

Ocean Frontiers utilizes a custom built, 38 foot twin jet catamaran named *Nauti-Cat*. The boat provides two tank morning and afternoon trips daily. Check-in for the morning trip is 8:30, it leaves about one-half hour later and returns around 12:30 pm. Afternoon check-in is 1:00 pm.

Again, plan to leave one-half hour later and return around 4:30 pm. Prices include tanks, weights and belts, as well as transportation if required. Ocean Frontiers is currently the only East End operation that provides free pick-up service from anywhere on the island.

Need to rent a camera or get film processed? No problem. In addition to running dive services, Ocean Frontiers is also an agent for Cathy Church's Sunset U/W Photo Centre, giving guests access to Cathy's full line of rental photo and video equipment, as well as E-6 processing.

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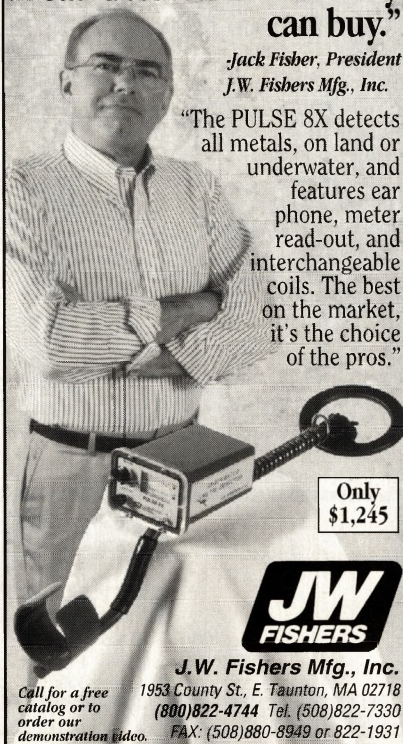
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GRAND CAYMAN'S EAST END

Having no ties to any particular resort or hotel, Ocean Frontiers can also pre-arrange or direct guests to a long list of accommodations—from hotels or condos to guesthouses scattered throughout the island, including Seven Mile Beach. Closer to East End, the list includes Ole Jud's, a small, inexpensive resort just ten minutes from the shop (featuring air-conditioned rooms with TV and restaurant) and a smattering of rental properties available through Cayman Villas. Specializing in more than 100 private homes and condos on the island, some of the beachfront homes handled by Cayman Villas include Villa of the Ten Sails and Collier's Castaway, which overlooks the barrier reef.

On the islands' northwestern corner is Morritt's Tortuga Club, Grand Cayman's largest and most successful time share condominium resort. Sprawling across 7.5 acres of prime beachfront property on the shore of Colliers Bay, this luxury resort includes 87 air-conditioned one, two and three bedroom units, as well as several penthouses. All are fully furnished, equipped with telephones, color TV and full sized kitchen (studio units have a kitchenette) with stove, microwave and refrigerator.

Designed as a family vacation retreat, Morritt's complete range of amenities include a restaurant, bar and sundries shop, large free-form swimming pool with swim-up bar and snack bar, exercise room, tennis courts and even table tennis. The resort's watersport center features rental watercraft, windsurfers and bicycles, beachside volleyball and a playground for kids. Tortuga Divers is a complete dive and snorkeling operation.

Headquartered beachside, under the management of Pat Kenny, Tortuga Divers offers the largest fleet of dive boats to operate off East End. Leaving from the resort's beach pier each morning, the fleet consists of two custom, 34 foot models—*Tortuga Diver* and *Hawksbill* (for groups of 12 to 14 each)—and a Newton 42 named *Leatherback* (for up to 21 divers). Running daily two tank morning and single tank afternoon trips, Tortuga Divers also provides a wide range of services for beginning divers—from scuba refresher to full instruction courses to all day snorkeling trips, via its new, 28 foot catamaran.

In addition to the normal itineraries, both Cayman Diving Lodge and Tortuga Divers run a three tank trip around the Northside to visit **Stingray City** (with two dives along the way) one to two times a week.

BRUCE BOWKER'S CARIB INN

(Continued from Page 81)

from. All of the sites also allow you to choose your depth, there's plenty to see from the shoreline to the sloping drop-off.

Our trips always include a one day safari to Washington-Slagbaai Park. We had been away for awhile and wondered if the Smooth Trunkfish would still be waiting for divers at **Playa Funchi's** shoreline. I'm happy to report they are, only instead of five there are now six.

We hadn't dived Klein Bonaire's **Hands Off** before and it was wonderful—a wide angle photographer's dream, with abundant fish and colorful Orange Elephant Ear Sponges. At **Forest**, also off Klein Bonaire, the fish life was extraordinary, as were the Black Corals. During a night dive off **Small Wall**, sleeping parrotfish literally littered the bottom and several roaming spiny lobsters were seen.

One special night Bruce took five of us to **White Hole** in his inflatable. This sink-hole offshore Lac Bay can only be dived when the winds and seas are calm. At night it was spectacular, filled with uncommonly seen marine life.

GETTING THERE

U.S. visitors can fly directly to Bonaire, a Dutch island, on ALM from Miami or Atlanta. Air Aruba offers flights from Miami or Newark that stop in Aruba before continuing onto Bonaire. U.S. and Canadian citizens need only proof of citizenship and a photo I.D., as well as a continuing on ticket, to enter the country.

Bonaire's freshwater supply comes from a desalination plant and is safe to drink right from the tap. Almost everyone you'll meet will speak English; American credit cards and currency are accepted nearly everywhere. Bonaire has next to no nightlife and very little shopping but excellent restaurants abound—there are about 40 from which to choose. Fast food—KFC, Subway and pizza—is now available as well.

New friends may be intriguing but old friends are the best. To me, Bonaire and the Carib Inn are most definitely old and valued friends. For more information and or reservations, contact Bruce Bowker directly at (011) 599-7-8819 between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm (EST). You can fax him at (011) 599-7-5295 any time or e-mail 75317.667@compuserve.com.

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TECHNIFACTS

(Continued from Page 67)

macrofeeders range from herbivores to predator carnivores. There are also shells that suck fluid from the tiny cells of algae and parasitic mollusks with highly specialized feeding methods. The most important factor in the mollusk's ability to eat a wide range of food is the radula and buccal part of their feeding complex.

The radula, found in the mouth of all mollusks except the bivalves, is usually a flexible file-like ribbon having horny or chitinous tooth-like structures. They are as variable as the animals. Their sizes and shapes dictate feeding habits. All cone shells have a radula system composed of a small dart-like apparatus that can inject poison into prey to immobilize it. Usually the larger the cone shell the larger the radula and the more virulent the poison. Generally, the cone shells with a marbled color pattern or tent like patterns are the most poisonous. Species that have been involved with the death of humans include *Conus textile*, *C. bandanus* and *C. geographus*. The animal making the shell of *Conus gloriamaris*, once a very rare and valuable shell, produces one of the largest radula barbs of the cone shells. However, it has never been reported being involved in the death of humans. Smaller cone shells, having relatively small radula barbs, have been involved in several stings that made divers ill. All cone shells should be handled carefully by the large end.

One solution to the subsistence problem is some forms of life are day feeders while others feed at night. Another is that some animals can, and do, ingest prey that is much larger. By doing this the predator may have to feed only once in several days. I once studied a fish eating cone shell (*Conus striatus*) that had stung, immobilized and ingested a fish that was twice as large as it was. The fish was partly visible in the proboscis for three days before it was completely digested.

If Technifacts readers have questions regarding any of the molluscan fauna, write to me, c/o SKIN DIVER Magazine, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515

SUBMARINES

The principal difference between diving bells and submarines is the latter have some method of propulsion. In the early history of underwater swimmers, divers and submariners it is hard to separate the differences in their efforts. This brief account of some early submarines is only an introduction. Not all the submarine designs ever got past the design stage. Fortunately for the inventor, as well as potential crews, many designs were submarines only on paper.

In 1578, Englishman William Bourne

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published a book titled *Inventions and Devices* in which he described what may have been the first submarine, although it was only a paper sub. Then, in 1620, Dutchman Cornelius van Drebbel completed the first vessel that could be termed a submarine. Reportedly, he constructed two such boats of different sizes. The larger of the two was propelled by 12 oars that entered the hull through watertight leather joints. The hull was wood, covered with oiled leather and strengthened by iron bands.

By 1653, new ideas for submarines had arisen. The Frenchman De Son's submarine was much larger, being more than 70 feet in length with a beam of just 8 feet. De Son's boat was powered by a giant spring similar to the main spring of a clock. According to the designer the spring-wound device provided enough power for an eight hour submerged run. The boat was built but was a complete failure and ended her career as a side-show exhibit; thus saving many lives. In 1749, a French physicist, Marriotte, designed a new submarine, propelled by oars. When resting on the bottom, the oars were used to make the vessel "walk" across the bottom.

Then the Americans got into the act. David Bushnell developed the relatively small, one person *Turtle*. Bushnell's submarine also was probably the first to use a propeller for propulsion. Certainly it was the first to use a thruster for upward or downward movement. An outboard oar provided an assist to the propellers and buoyancy was changed with tanks. All the methods and materials used by Bushnell in his sub were later used by others but with greatly improved technology. Another American inventor, Robert Fulton, developed the submarine *Nautilus* in 1801. Both American designs were attack vessels. Explosive charges were attached to the hulls of enemy vessels. When operating submerged, power was via a hand-turned screw device. When barely submerged or on the surface *Nautilus* sailed with a short mast and small sail. Top speed under sail was three to four knots. Top speed underwater under oar power was about the same—until the crew tired!

Another submarine, built in about 1770 by a Mr. Day, required stone ballast to achieve almost neutral buoyancy. On reaching the desired buoyancy, a small amount of water was allowed to enter the buoyancy tank and the vessel would sink. By late 1773, Mr. Day had completed some trials and proposed he could remain submerged for 24 hours without harm. "He nor his vessel ever again arose, nor a vestige of her was ever afterward discovered."

The following are some of the reasons for the loss of the submarine and its op-



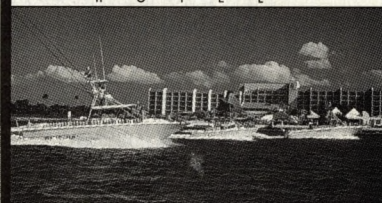
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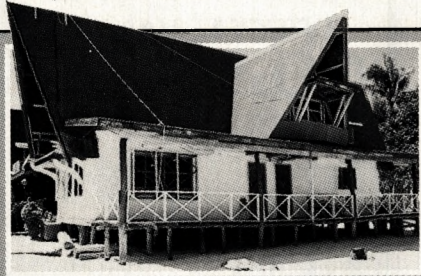
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erator. The depth for the demonstration was 20 fathoms (120 feet).

That the great depth and coldness of the water might have compressed or diminished the air as almost to leave a vacuum. True _____ False _____.

That, in this situation, the chamber was not strong enough to resist external pressure and consequently burst. True _____ False _____.

The cold region into which he rapidly descended might have chilled his whole mass of blood and caused immediate coagulation. True _____ False _____.

I suspect Mr. Day moved a decimal point in the wrong direction when he made his calculations. True _____ False _____.

Obviously, Mr. Day had not obtained his C-card. Had he done so he would have known that with 30 tons of ballast stone plus 5 tons of ballast water in a vessel displacing 20 tons, the vessel would not attain positive buoyancy with the release of only 10 tons of ballast. True _____ False _____.

This all happened in 1777, as reported by S.W. Smith. Send your answers, comments or ideas to E. R. Cross, c/o Technifacts, SKIN DIVER Magazine, 6420 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90048-5515.

There were not many C-cards around then. Remember to stay qualified with your C-card. Do not exceed your qualifications. Be a responsible diver, even if some of our ancestors were not. Death is a tough, permanent way to make history.

Take care of yourself and your dive buddy. 🐟

PALAU DIVING CENTER

(Continued from Page 41)

number of introductory programs, allowing nondivers the opportunity to discover Palau's beautiful underwater world.

Because divers are grouped by dive experience, however, the operation is able to cater to divers of all levels, providing the types of dives they are seeking. With three of its own boats and many others from Palau's local association to choose from, it is easy to accommodate many different expectations and choices of dive sites.

The dive center's boats are all 29 foot Japanese style boats, with sun canopy, oxygen, first aid and radio. Carrying only 8 to 11 divers per boat, the crafts' twin engines provide more than ample power for fast, smooth rides to the reef.

Palau Dive Center has 80, 80 cubic foot aluminum tanks available, as well as a full range of Scubapro rental equip-

ment. For photographers, special assistance is offered by the staff in locating specific images or specific marine creatures. Because of the guide's experience on Palau's reefs, their success rate in finding hard to find species is impressive.

Besides the operation's standard two tank dives per day program, with lunch provided, a third afternoon dive can also be arranged. Additionally, night dives are offered at Turtle Cove and Big Drop-off, which is undoubtedly one of the diving world's great night dives.

When asked about their favorite dive sites, Johnny and his staff thought a moment and responded with the following list:

Blue Corner: Undoubtedly Palau's single most popular dive, Blue Corner is one of those places that has so much action, so much diversity, that it can be dived day after day and always be exciting. At the top of a steep, outer wall at 45 feet, divers remain in one place while an underwater parade goes by in front of them. A huge school of Blackfin Barracuda are usually there, as well as massive shoals of Horse-eye Jacks. A large Napoleon Wrasse, long since befriended by the local dive guides, is curious of divers and comes in very close. Perhaps most exciting, however, is the congregation of Gray Reef Sharks that patrols off the edge of the wall. As many as 20 to 30 of these sleek predators circle the area, passing silently—and closely—in front of fascinated divers.

Blue Hole: Atop the reef flat just north of Blue Corner, Blue Hole is another of Palau's unique dives. In only a few feet of water, large round holes sink straight down through the reef. The sides are rich with encrusting sponges and other sessile invertebrates. Snappers, Bigeyes and Squirrelfish are lit by meandering beams of sunlight that slice through the soft blue, illuminating the inside of the shafts. At 90 feet, framed by gorgonians and Black Coral bushes, the grotto opens onto a sheer wall, creating a beautiful and surreal image that will never be forgotten.

Big Drop-off: Along the edge of the deep channel that cuts across the end of Ngemelis Island, Big Drop-off is a long, drifting wall dive. Because the area is so large, there are different species of marine creatures and varied reef formations at different depths. This is another dive that can be done over and over, never seeing the same things twice. Whitetip Reef Sharks patrol the top edge of the drop-off and Gray Reef Sharks and Green Sea Turtles can be seen cruising out away from the wall in deeper water. At one point, in about 40 feet of water, there is a beautiful, rare orange anemone that has been there for at least 10 to 15 years. Photographically, the site is excellent for both wide-angle and macro pho-

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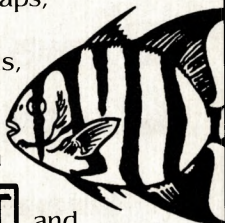
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PALAU DIVING CENTER

tography, with soft corals of many colors, huge red gorgonians and many sponges.

At night, Big Drop-off is very special. The entire wall is covered with orange and yellow cup corals (*Tubastrea coc-cinea*) that create a dazzling sight under a flashlight's beam.

Short Drop-off: On the opposite side of the lagoon from most of the dive sites, just out from Koror's harbor, is a very special site called Short Drop-off. A curving wall at the north side point of a channel cut, the area is vibrant and alive with marine life. The reef face here is rough and jumbled, rather than sheer, and schooling fish such as snappers and Oriental Sweetlips congregate in numerous small grottos. Large, red soft corals stand in the current and huge, orange gorgonians extend outward from the wall. Ocean pelagics such as Dogtooth Tuna are common and Gray Reef Sharks will be seen occasionally.

Turtle Cove Blue Hole: Just off the backside of Carp Island, only moments from the resort's dock, is one of Palau's most vibrant dive spots. A small blue hole extends downward from the reef flat to open onto the steep wall. Thousands and thousands of schooling fish—snappers, fusiliers, Horse-eye Jacks and Unicornfish—congregate around the top of the wall. Cleaning stations are numerous and the unusual sight of Unicornfish being cleaned seems commonplace. Shallow caves extend back into the wall in many places and shy, resident Lionfish, gobies of several species and Big-eyes will be found.

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which offers numerous flights and convenient connections. Travelers fly from Hawaii to Guam and connect from there to Palau, only an hour and forty-five minutes to the Southwest.

For complete information about diving Palau with Palau Diving Center and Carp Island Resort, contact your favorite dive travel agent or Carp Corporation, P.O. Box 5, Koror, Republic of Palau 96940; 011 (680) 488-2978, fax 011 (680) 488-3155.

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Dive Notes

TIATA IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: See & Sea Travel of San Francisco has its 1997 schedule of departures to Papua New Guinea aboard the fabulous *Tiata*.

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For further information, contact See & Sea Travel, Inc., 50 Francisco Street, #205, San Francisco, CA 94133, phone (415) 434-3400, fax (415) 434-3409, e-mail to divxprt@ix.netcom.com or visit on the Internet at <http://www.divxprt.com/see&sea>.

NAUI'S NEW TECHNICAL DIVER CERTIFICATION: The National Association of Underwater Instructors' (NAUI Worldwide) new 1996 standards include recreational technical diving instruction and certification at the Specialty Diver course level. NAUI instructors trained and certified in technical diving instruction by agencies recognized by NAUI may now be approved to issue Technical Diver certification cards to graduates of their instructor-specified, advanced level NAUI specialty course.

NAUI Worldwide is the world's oldest nonprofit membership training agency organized solely to support and promote dive safety through education. For further information on NAUI programs, visit the Internet Web Site at <http://www.naui.org/> or call (909) 621-5801.

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Saturday
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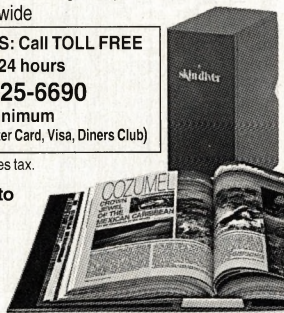
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Bermuda's Scuba Look

BY GERRI MURPHY

Bermuda businessman Harry W. Soares recently opened Scuba Look, a division of Enterprise Submarine Ltd. The new dedicated resort dive centre is at the beach dock of Grotto Bay Beach Resort, on Bermuda's historic East End. It is only three minutes from the airport and a few steps from the guest-rooms at this 198 room luxury resort.



photo/G. Murphy

Scuba Look has a 27 cfm Mako air compressor, 65 aluminum 80 cubic foot rental tanks and a full inventory of Dacor regulators, instrument consoles, BCs, snorkel sets and shorty wetsuits. The general manager, Colin Pearson, has a staff of three certified PADI instructors who offer scuba training and guided dive tours.

The heart of the operation is a new dive boat, *Scuba Look*. The 45 foot vessel has a 16 foot beam and is powered by a 700 hp Detroit diesel engine. She can cruise at 15 knots and carry up to 24 divers. She features a port side access gate for scuba entries and a stern ladder for return to the dive deck. Configured specifically for diving, the *Scuba Look* is considered Bermuda's largest and fastest dive boat, capable of long range trips to such remote wrecks as the *Cristobal Colon*.

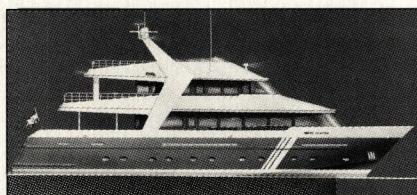
Scuba Look is the only dive centre at the island's East End, thus providing fast and easy access to seldom visited shipwreck sites. East End wrecks include the *Pelinaion*, a 385 foot Greek steamer in 20 to 65 feet of water; the *Rita Zovetto*, a 400 foot Italian cargo steamer in 20 to 70 feet of water; and the *Cristobal Colon*, a 490 foot Spanish luxury liner in 20 to 70 feet of water.

Scuba Look makes daily trips to 10 different shipwreck sites, as well as a dozen exceptionally healthy and robust coral reef sites. Underwater visibility can range from 50 to 150 feet. The best season for diving Bermuda is the fall, from September to November, when the water is still warm and the visibility is at its peak. Visiting divers can also take advantage of off-season prices during this period.

For more information or reservations, contact Scuba Look at 441-293-7319 or fax 441-295-2421 or write to Scuba Look, P.O. Box WK 658, Warwick WK BX, Bermuda.

Dive Notes

PETER HUGHES' MOON DANCER IN THE RED SEA: Peter Hughes Diving, in collaboration with 5 Star Diving Cruises and Diver's Lodge, began operation of the luxury live-aboard MV *Moon Dancer* August 31, 1996. *Moon Dancer* cruises the waters of the Red Sea.



The all inclusive eight or ten night itineraries, which include final night hotel stay in Cairo, usually depart Hurghada with a complement of 20 guests and 8 crew members. The brand new custom designed vessel is 105 feet in length with a 25 foot beam. All double occupancy staterooms have a private head and shower, individual air-conditioning and music controls and picture window or porthole views.

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Dive Notes

NAUI NEWS: The National Association of Underwater Instructors (NAUI Worldwide) has reorganized its process for training new leadership and instructor members.

Among other changes, the program creates the formal designation of NAUI Course Director. Those so designated will be able to conduct NAUI instructor training courses without prior approval of NAUI Headquarters. In addition, NAUI branch managers, regional managers, national liaisons and others have been re-designated as training representatives. They will support and coordinate the efforts of NAUI instructor trainers and course directors.

Perhaps most significant is the authorization of the option to split the NAUI Instructor Training Course into a two phase training and testing program.

In other news, NAUI has added German and Italian language publications to its scuba training materials, in addition to the English, Spanish and Japanese manuals previously available. NAUI product translations into French, Osmanli, Hebrew and other languages are also in progress.

For further information on NAUI programs, visit the NAUI Internet Web Site at <http://www.naui.org/> or call (909) 621-5801.

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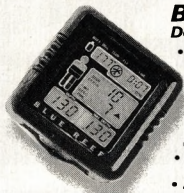
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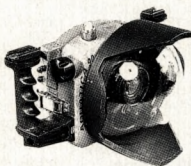
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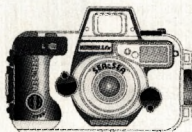
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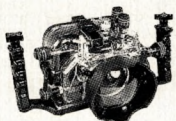
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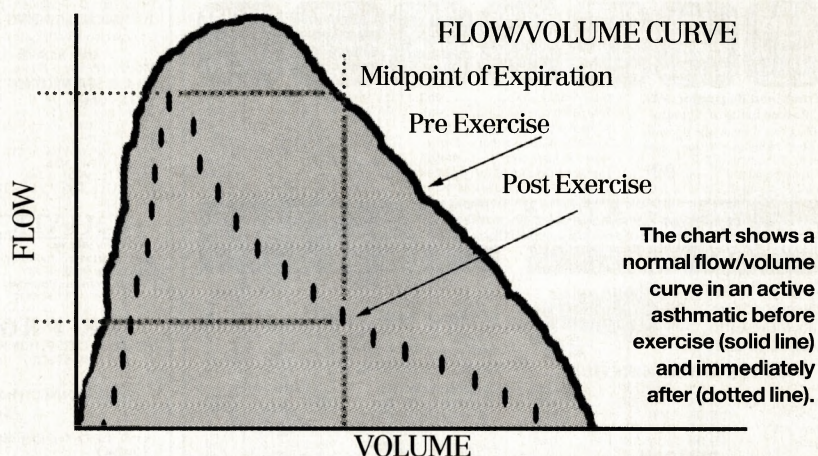
Asthma and Diving

BY FRED BOVE, M.D., PH.D.

In June of 1995 the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society held a workshop on diving with asthma, chaired by Dr. David Elliott, an internationally renowned diving physician. The proceedings and conclusions of the workshop have now been published and they provide important new guidelines for asthmatics who want to dive.

Asthma results in narrowing or spasm of the airways. The cause of the condition is an inflammation of the airways that produces swelling and constriction of the muscular lining of the airways to the lung.

While the discussion on diving with asthma was going on in the United States, we've had the opportunity to observe asthmatic divers in England who have no prohibition to diving. There are several interesting published observations. Some British divers have stated they dive as early as one hour after recovering from an acute asthma attack. (We do not recommend this approach!) In the recently published workshop, the British data was reviewed by Dr. Patrick Farrell from the United Kingdom Sports Diving Medical Committee. He followed 250 asthmatics for several years and documented 20,000 dives without an incident of DCS or AGE. He also examined the records for treatment of sport divers in the hyperbaric chambers in England. Between 1991 and 1993, 399 sport divers were treated for a decompression accident; there were nine asthmatics. The analysis showed no excess rate of DCS or AGE in asthmatic divers compared to a normal population. About four percent of the 70,000 sport divers in the



The narrowed airways cause a problem with exhalation. It is this problem of emptying the lung that raises concern for pulmonary barotrauma. Exercise capacity is reduced owing to the inability to move air rapidly into and out of the lung. Asthma can be triggered by allergies, respiratory infection, anxiety, exercise and breathing cold air.

Several surveys, including one done through SKIN DIVER, have shown that four to seven percent of active divers in the U.S. have asthma. Data collected by the Divers Alert Network has shown that diving accidents do not favor individuals with a history of asthma. The DAN data suggests that active asthmatics (someone who is short of breath and actively wheezing) may have a small increase in diving accident risk—either decompression sickness (DCS) or arterial gas embolism (AGE)—but the increase is small and is not statistically significant.

United Kingdom have asthma. The DAN data from 1988 through 1994 had 3,089 cases of DCS and AGE. Twenty-three of the 369 with AGE had asthma and 123 of the 2,720 with DCS had asthma. These proportions are the same as the proportion of divers who have asthma.

Both the DAN data and the data from the British sport diving survey failed to show a risk for pulmonary barotrauma in asthmatics. A review of the concerns for barotrauma in the asthmatic diver revealed that the information used to arrive at the conclusion that asthmatics should not dive doesn't exist. Most of the information is speculative, derived from physiologic principles not tested in humans. What is apparent from many human studies in athletes of all types is that exercise capacity is severely reduced when asthma is active. Indeed when reviewing the few cases of asthmatics who died while diving, it was apparent that failure to

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DIVING MEDICINE

swim to safety on the surface was a major problem. As all of this information was brought together at the 1995 workshop, it became apparent to those attending that a new set of guidelines was needed.

The question to be answered is not whether asthmatics can dive but which asthmatics can dive.

The consensus was that lung function must be normal before an asthmatic can undertake diving. Measurements of lung function before and after exercise will demonstrate whether a diver has reduced exercise capacity. If treatment results in normal lung function, the risk of a problem is eliminated and the individual can dive. It makes sense that if no abnormality is present after treatment, there should be no risk for diving.

The workshop provides information on the measurements needed to determine normal lung function. The measurement requires the asthmatic to undergo a breathing test that measures the rate air can leave the lungs during a forceful exhalation. The resulting curve of air flow plotted against lung volume is an excellent indication that airways are normal. The diagram shows a normal flow/volume

curve in an asthmatic before and immediately after exercise. The post exercise curve indicates air is leaving the lung slowly, exercise capacity is reduced owing to shortness of breath and the individual needs treatment. The post exercise curve can be restored to normal with the use of inhaled medication. The workshop even suggested that inhaled steroid medication would be the best treatment for athletes of all types. A four to six week course of twice a day therapy will usually restore the breathing test to normal. Under the circumstance of a normal post exercise curve, diving will be safe.

Some physicians at the workshop felt a test of exercise capacity might be as useful as the breathing test for predicting safety in diving. The final recommendation, however, indicated the breathing test should be normal to decide if diving was safe. The British criteria require that peak flow be above 85 percent of expected normal.

Obviously, the asthmatic who is acutely ill, with difficulty breathing, wheezing, cough or fever should not dive. The acute illness must be resolved and breathing function restored to normal. Full recovery, however, would allow a return to diving, again based on evidence the breathing test is normal. Individuals who have permanent lung damage from long standing

asthma with chronic emphysema should not dive because the alterations in lung function are irreversible and cannot be corrected with medication. It is also important to avoid smoking tobacco if you are asthmatic, as the smoke will sometimes aggravate the asthma.

Standards of medical practice are often slow to change and only do so when new information, research studies, new medications or surgical procedures are developed. In the case of prohibitions for diving, changes are even more difficult because many physicians will take the conservative approach and prohibit any activity that could be detrimental even though there is little evidence the activity would cause a problem. Such is the case with asthma and diving. However, through a strong effort by many diving physicians, a more reasonable approach has been developed that is based on data and experience. It should bring the world of sport diving to a greater number of people without additional hazard.

For those who are interested, a copy of the workshop on asthma and diving entitled "Are Asthmatics Fit to Dive?" can be obtained from the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society, 10531 Metropolitan Avenue, Kensington, Maryland 20895. The cost is \$20 plus \$2.50 for postage and handling. 



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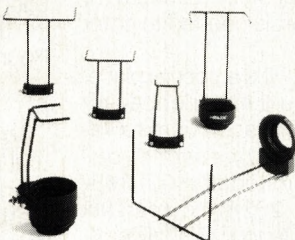
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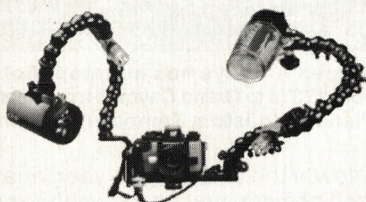
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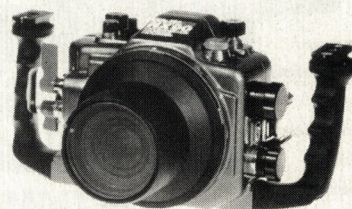
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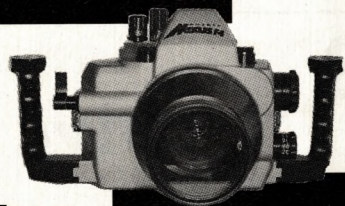
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PALAU AGGRESSOR II

(Continued from Page 48)

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STINGRAY PHOTO ROUND-UP

(Continued from Page 45)

STINGRAY CITY/SANDBAR

Stingray City was first described in *SKIN DIVER* nearly ten years ago as one of the world's most exciting shallow dives and it continues to delight divers and snorkelers. Just behind the barrier reef in North Sound, Stingray City was originally a temporary anchorage for fishermen. They gathered in this calm, protected area to clean the day's catch, throwing the scraps overboard. Divers noticed a large number of rays seemed to congregate on the sand below and the rest is history.

The bottom at Stingray City is principally flat, white sand, with a few scattered coral heads. The depth is 10 to 12 feet, depending on the tide. Most of the time the water is the same clear blue found on the North Wall.

Diving Stingray City is not only exciting, it's easy. Just get in the water, kneel on the sand and let the show come to you. Watch the Parrots Landing divemasters feed the rays, then try it yourself. They'll show you the technique of keeping the bait in your closed fist until you are ready to give it up. When the ray sucks the bait off your open palm, you'll understand how they normally feed by "vacuuming" their prey out of the sand.

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Cayman Airways has nonstop flights to Grand Cayman from Miami, Orlando, Houston, Tampa and Atlanta, so you are only a hop, skip and a jump from Grand Cayman right now. U.S. citizens can enter the country with a passport, certified birth certificate or voter's registration card. If you are not using a passport, you'll need a photo ID as well. Electrical adapters are not necessary. Cayman dollars are the official currency, although almost every business will take U.S. dollars and give you change in Cayman currency. The exchange rate is usually \$.80 Cayman to \$1 U.S. at the bank and \$.75 Cayman to \$1 at stores.



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Choosing Video Format

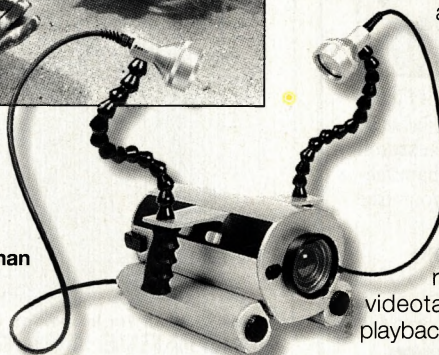
BY JIM CHURCH

Underwater videography has changed dramatically in the past decade. Can you remember when a housed Sony video camera and VHS VCR weighed almost 100 pounds? Just a few years later, a housed video camera and VHS VCR weighed about 50 to 55 pounds. I remember thanking the video gods for delivering us up to 250 lines of resolution. Today, a digital camcorder housing with twin underwater video lights weighs approximately 25 pounds and delivers 500 or more lines of resolution. How time and technology do fly by.

A major reason for the size and weight of the early underwater video systems was the separate VCR housed with the video camera. Later, camcorders with built-in VTRs (video tape recorders) hit the streets. The first 8mm camcorders were amazing little devices that became even smaller a few years later. Today, compact Hi-8 camcorders are the standard for under-



The new digital U/W systems (right) weigh only 18 pounds, compared to more than 50 (above) for the older analog setups.



water videographers. However, times continue to change and there is a new kid on the block—the digital video camcorder.

ANALOG VERSUS DIGITAL

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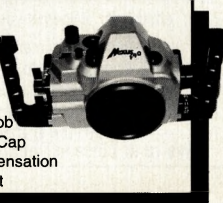
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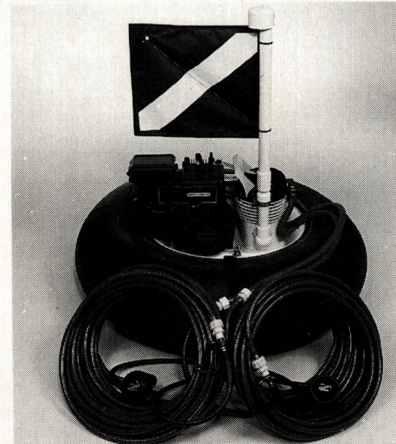
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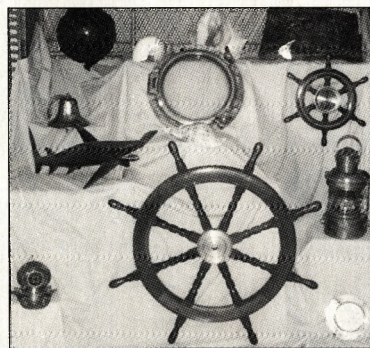
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VIDEO COURSE

variations recorded on the videotape and create the video picture. When you make either an original analog recording or a dub (copy), the recording VCR can't duplicate the varied voltages of the video signal exactly. Each time you make a dub, you get "generation loss" (picture quality is lost with each copy).

Digital camcorders, such as the Sony DC VX-1000, send a signal from the image sensor to the videotape. This signal is a series of binary digits, 0s and 1s. Because there are only two digits to read (0 or 1), rather than a complicated pattern of changing voltages, the video picture is

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Quest: 1215 Kleppe Lane, Suite 3, Sparks, NV 89431; (800) 676-4662, fax (702) 359-5577. Web site: <http://www.questsports.com>.

Sony: Web site: <http://www.sel.sony.com/SEL/consumer/cam-corder/digital.html>.

superior. Thus, if you dub digital to digital, generation loss is virtually nonexistent.

FORMAT AND RESOLUTION

Video image sharpness is expressed in lines of resolution. Regular 8mm and VHS camcorders and VCRs usually produce about 240 lines of resolution or less. Hi-8 and S-VHS camcorders and VCRs produce about 400 lines of resolution. Digital camcorders produce about 500 or more lines of resolution. However, when dubbing from a digital camcorder to an inexpensive VHS VCR that only records 240 lines of resolution, 240 lines is all you get. There may be less jitter and less color smear but you can't get more than 240 lines of sharpness. The same applies if you connect a digital camcorder or S-video VCR to an inexpensive TV set. If the TV can only display 240 lines of resolution, feeding it 400 or 500 won't increase its output. The weakest link determines the strength of the chain.

Don't let the limitations of your present VCR or TV set keep you from switching from analog to digital. Your next VCR may be digital and your next TV set may have a digital input.

IS MY EQUIPMENT OBSOLETE?

Yes and no. Digital will eventually do to analog video what the CD-ROM did to LP records but analog systems will probably be around for several more years.

Suppose, for example, you have two high quality S-video editing VCRs (Hi-8 or S-VHS) and an edit controller or the Sony EVO 9720 Hi-8 Editing VCR. (Either way, you may have spent \$5,000.) All is not lost; you can dub from a digital camcorder to S-video with virtually no generation loss while going from digital to the Hi-8 dub.

DUBBING AND EDITING DIGITAL

Digital VCRs may soon appear but prices will probably be high and bugs may need to be worked out. I'm not abandoning my analog equipment until the digital VCR market is established and reasonably settled. For editing, Panasonic may offer a digital laptop editing system in 1996. It will have both a player and recorder, two monitoring screens and a built-in editing controller. The unit supposedly can edit either digital and analog tapes.

If you wish to edit in digital, purchase a



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VIDEO COURSE

digital camcorder with a DV (digital video) input/output. This allows you to dub to one digital camcorder from another digital camcorder or digital VCR. If you must use an S-video input or output, you are dubbing analog signals.

Expect to face planned obsolescence. Manufacturers (in my opinion) tend to hold back important features so they can offer "new and improved models" later.

WHICH DIGITAL CAMCORDER IS BEST?

The best way to select a digital camcorder for U/W use is to begin by asking the housing manufacturers which camcorders they house. The four features I would look for are: three chips, image stabilization, TBC (time-base correction) and digital input/output.

At this writing, the Sony VX-1000, which has the above features, is the most popular digital camcorder for U/W use. At this writing, housings are available from Amphibico, Gates Underwater Industries, Light & Motion Industries and Quest. Other manufacturers may also offer housings now or in the near future.

THREE CHIPS OR ONE?

For *I Love Lucy* fans, imagine Lucy is working on a bakery assembly line. Three different kinds of pastries come down the line and Lucy has to place each kind in a different box. However, Lucy can't handle all three pastries, so the boss assigns three Lucys to the assembly line. Each Lucy only boxes one kind of pastry. It's the same with camcorder chips. Three chips—each responsible for one primary color—do a better job than one.

TIME BASE CORRECTION

TBC (time base correction) corrects errors in the time code that marks the video frames. In movie talk, it corrects the spacing of the sprocket holes. As with having three chips, TBC helps send the best possible signal to the videotape.

CONCLUSIONS

While the digital camcorder recording on videotape is today's major change, I think the next major change will be in the image storage system. A disc or card will probably replace videotape somewhere down the line.

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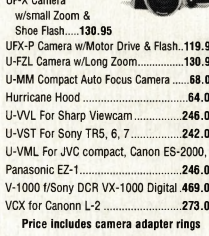
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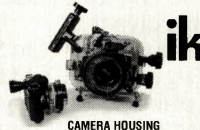
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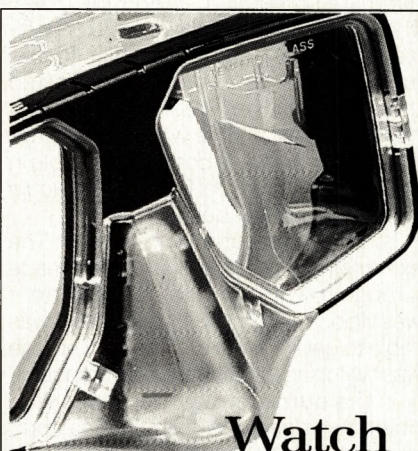
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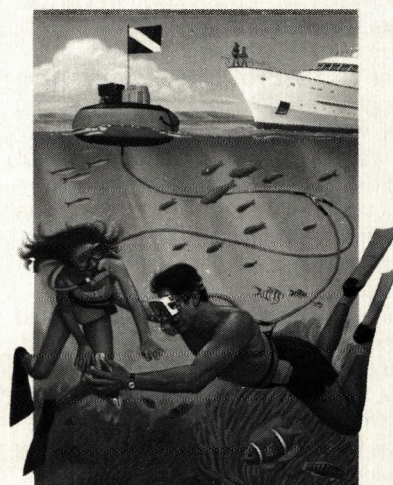


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An American Diver Learns a Frigid Norwegian Fjord is a Lot Different Than the Tropical Caribbean Sea

BY JEFFREY M. GALLER, D.D.S.

My wife and I arrived in beautiful Oslo, Norway, in late July. First we vacationed together, then she went off on a shopping expedition and I headed to a recommended dive shop.

I explained to the dive shop manager that, as an overweight, middle-aged dentist from Brooklyn, I was looking for a nice, relaxing and enjoyable dive that would give me a sample of Scandinavian diving. Since most of my diving had been in the warm, tranquil waters of the Florida Keys and the Caribbean, I had no macho illusions about my ability to handle a physically taxing dive that would require great expenditures of energy. (Back home, whenever I feel like exercising, I lie down until the urge passes.)

The manager nodded and introduced me to Sven, a handsome, tall, physically-fit, blond, blue-eyed Norwegian god.

During the hour long drive to the site, Sven explained that I should try not to be nervous about the dive, even though I'd be wearing a drysuit for the very first time, the water visibility was likely to be poor and strong currents are usually present. I was enjoying the scenery of the Norwegian countryside too much to worry. And, besides, I had a strong and capable dive instructor I felt I could depend upon.

The plan Sven outlined seemed simple enough. We would gear up in the parking area, walk down a small road and enter the water. We would swim out 45 feet and descend 75 feet to the base of a rock wall. We would then ascend the side of the wall, descend the other side, swim to the shore on the bottom and exit the water.

Finally, he explained that all I really had to know about diving in a drysuit was, first, to use my drysuit as a BC. This seemed easy. Second, he warned me not to swim with my feet higher than my head, because the air in my drysuit could rise to my feet and suspend me upside down.

The first problem appeared in the parking lot. It was exceptionally hot and the sun beat down mercilessly. With great difficulty I squeezed into the drysuit, hood

and gloves. The feeling was new, unfamiliar and unpleasant. The tightness around my neck and unpleasant smell from the suit made me feel like retching. By the time I put on the weightbelt, my tank and mask, I was thoroughly miserable.

I must have looked unhappy, because Sven gallantly offered to carry my flashlight.

By the time I struggled down the slope to the water's edge, I was completely out of breath, my heart was pounding and my back ached—I feared it would be permanently bent by the heavy tank and weightbelt. My thigh muscles felt like rubber. I was not a happy diver.

Sven was waiting for me. "What took you so long?" he asked cheerfully. "Watch the current. I'll meet you on the bottom!" He dropped into the current and 15 yards later, plunged down out of view.

It was here I consciously violated a cardinal rule of diving. We all know better than to continue on when both body and mind are screaming, "Abort the dive." This was mistake number one. I rationalized that I couldn't let Sven wait for me futilely. Also, I couldn't make it back up that hill with all my gear on. I couldn't have traveled all this way for nothing. Besides, I've always been comfortable in the water and the cool fjord waters would soon make me feel better.

I entered the water with difficulty. The extremely sharp and slippery rocks made it tough to find a foothold. The current was vicious and only with great effort was I able to get my fins on. I was glad no one was watching as I floundered ungracefully in the current toward the descent point. As I descended past a pea soup layer into a jet black zone of water, my egregious error of not becoming familiar with local dive conditions became more obvious—mistake number two. Also, I couldn't watch my ascending bubbles or check my gauges because Sven had my flashlight. The water became extremely cold and I was shivering under my drysuit. My fingers were getting numb. I didn't know the temperature at the bottom of a fjord is 39°F year-round.

At the bottom, visibility was much better and I found myself kneeling on a field of starfish. My dive guide found me and motioned for me to follow him along the bottom, alongside the pile of rocks that made up the base of the wall.

I realized then that I was terribly overweighted. Afterward, I found out the dive shop operator erred in converting American pounds into European kilograms. I kept adding air to my drysuit in an attempt to become neutrally buoyant. I hoped the soft bodies and regenerative abilities of the starfish would help the colony survive my swath of destruction. I don't remember ever feeling so cold, exhausted and miserable.

My guide indicated it was time to ascend, which was very difficult for me in my overweighted condition. I added more air to my drysuit and finally reached a point where I could ascend slowly and comfortably. I was enjoying the best part of the dive as I left the more frigid waters of the fjord's depths and floated up a vast wall completely covered with white anemones.

My enjoyment was short-lived, however. Diving with unfamiliar equipment and not being properly trained in its use was my third and most serious mistake. The great amount of air I poured into my drysuit was expanding rapidly. Soon, I was shooting toward the surface. My numb fingers finally found their way to the air release button of the drysuit and I slowed to a more controlled ascent. I tried stopping at 15 feet to give myself time to decompress but the current and surge were too strong for me.

On the surface, Sven couldn't understand why I refused to descend the other side of the wall; I floated on my back, kicking lazily back to shore. He seemed annoyed when I made him carry all my equipment up to the van by himself.

On the drive back to my hotel, Sven confided he hoped to soon obtain his instructor's certificate and that a good part of his income was dependent on generous tips from satisfied customers such as myself. 

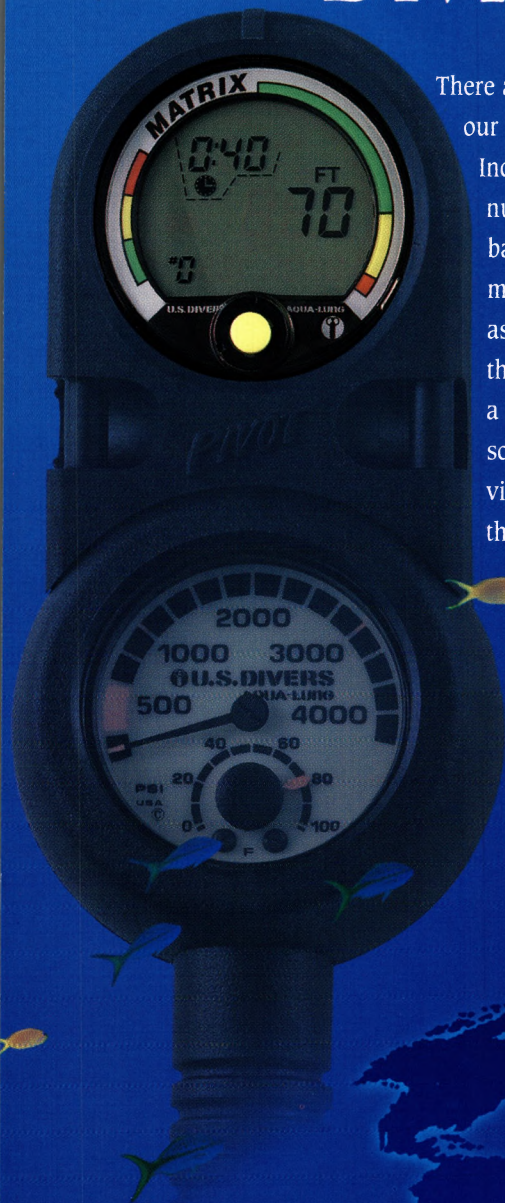
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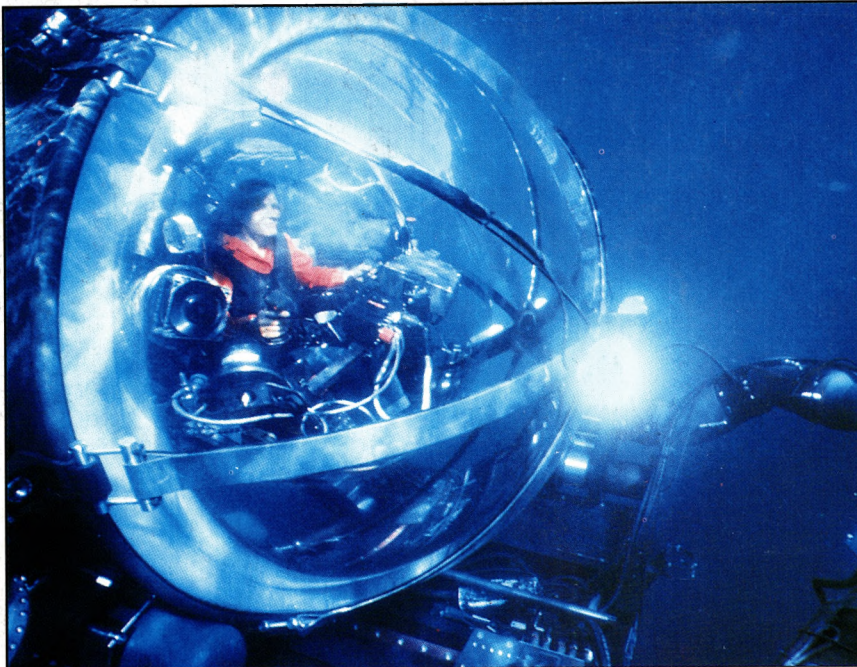
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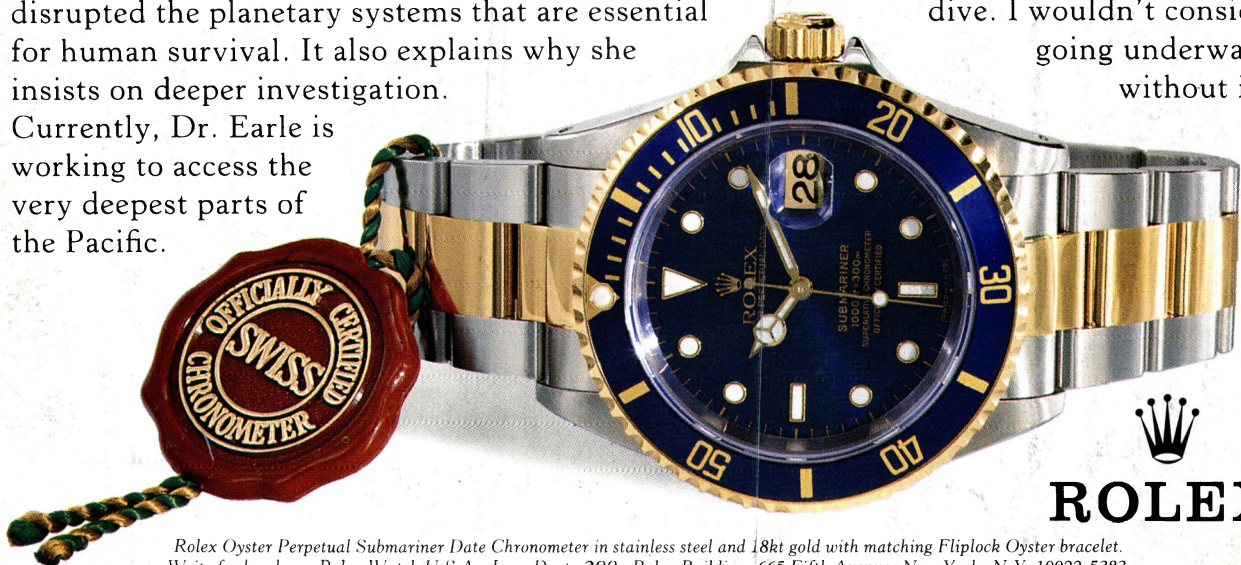
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